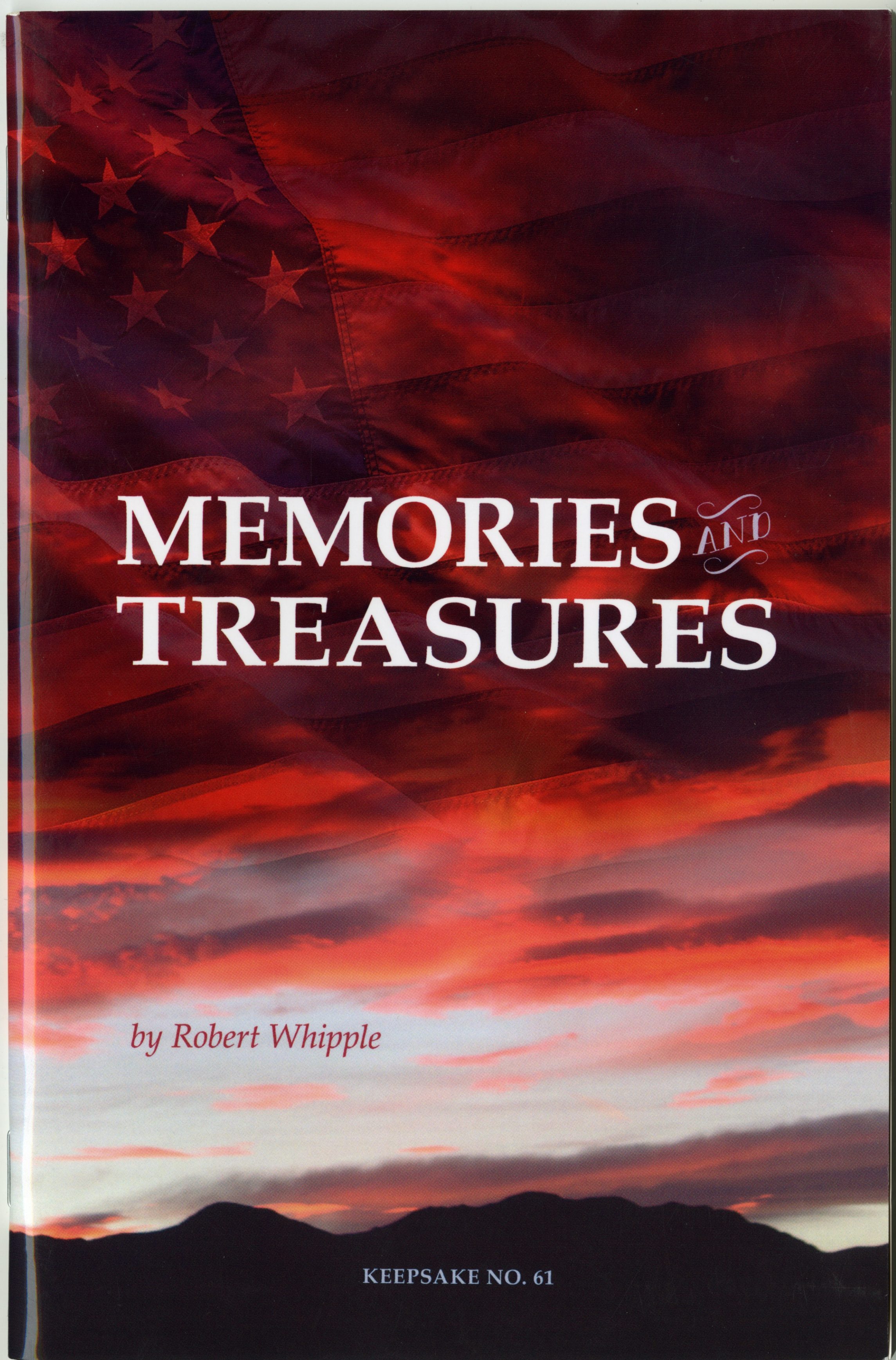

# MEMORIES AND TREASURES

*by Robert Whipple*

KEEPSAKE NO. 61

# MEMORIES AND TREASURES

## A LOOK AT INSPIRING MEMBERS OF THE DEATH VALLEY '49ERS

*by Robert Whipple*

KEEPSAKE NO. 61

For Mini, who feeds me well.

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P.O Box 338
Death Valley, CA 92328

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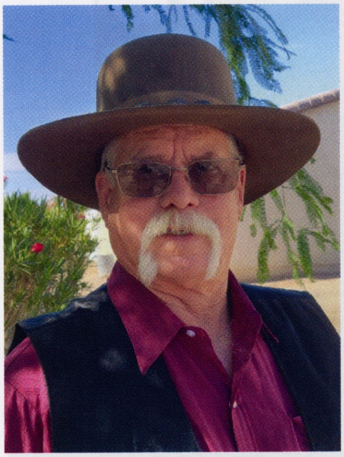
## WITH HONOR

After many years of petitioning for an appearance at the '49ers encampment, I was able to finally obtain the services of the USMC Mounted Color Guard, the only one of its kind in the country. Since then, the Marines have appeared each year to lead the wagon train from the Inn to the Ranch at Furnace Creek. It's a stirring sight!

The '49ers organization has a rich history of honoring our country and its veterans. Many '49ers have selflessly served our country with honor. I thank them all.

# ABOUT THIS BOOK



In the 73 years since the centennial celebration of the 1849 crossing of Death Valley, the '49ers have produced 60 keepsake books. These include stories of the pioneers, the native Timbisha Shoshone, and the miners to name a few.

In this 61st keepsake I wish to recognize and honor those who inspired me to become part of the Death Valley '49ers. From my very first encounter with the organization in 2006, when my sweetheart, Mentie "Mini" Hazelett, and I attended an encampment, I knew I was hooked. Each person we met, from the "average Joe" to the decorated war veteran, had a hand in keeping the legacy of the original '49ers alive. More importantly, they are the finest group of individuals I have ever befriended. Mini and I admire them all. With Mini by my side and the '49ers organization as an extended family, I have truly been blessed.

Those outlined in this book have been my mentors, partners, and family for the past 15 or so years. My life is richer and more meaningful for having known them; they are my heroes. Their stories are preceded in this book by a few of my fondest memories. I hope you will enjoy learning more about them.

The Death Valley '49ers encampment has always been a place to gather and make new friends, spend quality time with old friends, and enjoy a week or so without interruption from the outside world. I could never say enough to express my sincere appreciation for what the '49ers have given me. It has been my distinct privilege and honor to be part of this organization.

Robert Whipple, 2022–2023 Chairman of the Board
Daggett, California

*Mini and Robert, 2022*

# LEE & LUCY CROSBY

# INTRODUCTION

Lee Crosby was president of the '49ers on two separate occasions, 1994 and 1998. He always stepped up when the need arose. When I first joined the '49ers, Lee and I became friends right off. We talked at length at least once a week. I could listen to him talk all day. One particular conversation comes to mind when he told me that dealing with volunteers is like herding cats. Everyone has their own idea of how to do things. You just have to communicate and be gracious, but be a leader. This advice has served me well in both my career and volunteer work.

What impressed me the most about Lee was his military background, his formal education from West Point, and his engineering degrees. He was an amazing person and had an answer for every question and a solution for every problem. I considered him my mentor, my hero, and my confidant.

Lee's wife, Lucy, was a jewel of a lady. Ms. Lucy was always a gracious hostess and made me feel comfortable in her presence. She was the most down-to-earth lady ever. Upon knowing her better, I came to see that she was a very strong-willed individual. She ran the roost. I remember once asking her how her boys were. She said, "My boys are just fine. They're all three working full-time jobs and none of 'em are in jail. Life is good." Her family meant the world to her. She and Lee meant so much, not only to me, but to the whole '49ers organization.

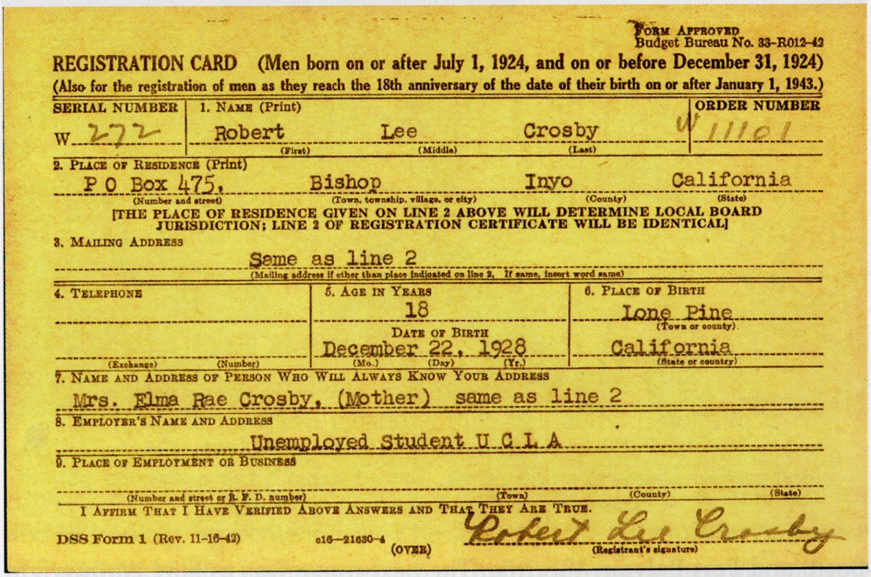
Robert "Lee" Crosby and Lucy Leach Crosby's story is a testament to the strength of family. Their lifelong service to community and country was made possible by their strong family foundation and dedication to one another.

Lee was born December 22, 1928 at Lone Pine, California. He grew up in nearby Laws and Bishop, the fourth generation on his mother's side to do so. His father was a civil engineer and the district manager of the AAA automobile club in Bishop. His mother was a homemaker.

From a young age Lee demonstrated dedication and leadership in both academics and service. While a member of the Bishop troop of Boy Scouts of America he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. Lee's early introduction to and love of Death Valley brought him back time and time again.

Lee graduated from the Army and Navy Academy at Carlsbad, California, a private college-preparatory military boarding school. While there, he received the academy's "Silver A," the highest award given to a cadet by the academy. Upon his eighteenth birthday, in 1946, Lee registered for the draft. By then he was a student at UCLA.

While at UCLA, Lee earned an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, where he rose to second in command of his cadet company.



FORM APPROVED
Budget Bureau No. 33-R012-42

**REGISTRATION CARD** (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER W 272

1. NAME (Print) Robert (First) Lee (Middle) Crosby (Last)

ORDER NUMBER W 11101

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) P O Box 475, (Number and street) Bishop (Town, township, village, or city) Inyo (County) California (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON LINE 2 ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS Same as line 2 (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same, insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE (Exchange) (Number)

5. AGE IN YEARS 18

DATE OF BIRTH December 22, 1928 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)

6. PLACE OF BIRTH Lone Pine (Town or county) California (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Elma Rae Crosby, (Mother) same as line 2

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Unemployed Student U C L A

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

Robert Lee Crosby (Registrant's signature)

DSS Form 1 (Rev. 11-16-42) o16—21630-4 (OVER)

In 1950, Lee went on a blind date with a beautiful young Skidmore College student from Wellesley, Massachusetts, named Lucy Leach (born April 2, 1931). From that first date, Lee and Lucy began a long-distance courtship. Lucy completed her degree at Skidmore in 1952 and obtained employment with Bell Telephone in New York City while waiting for Lee to finish his final year at the academy.

Upon his graduation in June 1953, Lee received his commission as Second Lieutenant of Engineers and, wasting no time, married Lucy at the West Point chapel the following day.

Lee's service to the United States included duty across the world from Korea to the Pentagon. Lucy's service was to Lee, raising their boys, and volunteer work. While Lee was stationed in Korea, Lucy stayed with her parents in Ohio where son Robert L. Crosby, Jr. was born. No new mother has spare time, yet with the support of her parents Lucy was able to volunteer as an aide at a nearby VA hospital until Lee returned. That was life as an army wife.

After their son Geoffrey was born in 1956, a series of Lee's career developmental assignments followed at Fort Lewis, Washington; Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa; Boston, Massachusetts, where son William was born; and Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The next move was to Fort Wainwright, Alaska, where Lucy was very involved in Officers Wives Club activities. The family then returned to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for a year at the Army Command and General Staff College followed by an assignment to the Pentagon. While in the D.C. area, Lucy worked as a volunteer and then as an employee at the Fort Belvoir army hospital.

Seven-year-old Patricia A. Eilinstein, with Lt Robert L. Crosby in the Northeastern University rifle range, scored a bull's-eye under the patient coaching of the R. O. T. C. instructor.

Lee's education continued after West Point. He earned a civil engineering master's degree as well as graduating from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth.

When Lee was sent to Vietnam in 1968, Lucy and sons remained at their home in Springfield, Virginia. Among many other assignments, Lee commanded a construction battalion that built a 1,002′ major bridge over the Saigon River, the longest permanent bridge of its class ever constructed by engineer troops. Lee also served as senior engineer advisor to the Army of Vietnam IV Corps headquarters at Can Tho in the Mekong River Delta area.

Upon his return from Vietnam in 1969, Lee was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Engineers to activate the Army Corps of Engineers Water Resources Institute in Alexandria, Virginia. After that, the Crosbys spent a year in Alabama where Lee was an Army exchange student at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, graduating in 1971. The Crosbys then returned to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, where Lee was promoted to colonel and served as Secretary of the Army Engineer School.

When Lee was assigned to a five-year stint at the Cold Region Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL) in Hanover, New Hampshire, Lucy volunteered at the local hospital associated with Dartmouth College.

The Crosby's final posting was a four year assignment that began in 1978. Lee was Deputy Division Engineer of the Army Corps of Engineers North Pacific Division at Portland, Oregon, with responsibility for civil and military works in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska. Following the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in 1980, Lee was involved in disaster recovery operations to restore the affected navigation and flood control systems of the Columbia River system.

In his wide-ranging military career, Lee was involved in basic and applied research at northern locations that included Alaska and northern Greenland as well as the Antarctic facilities of McMurdo Station and Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station. Under the US-USSR detente science and technology agreement period he served as the only military member of the United States exchange group on hydropower engineering and construction and visited research organizations in Moscow and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and a major hydropower construction project at Sayano-Shushenskaya on the Yenisei River in Siberia.

Lee's military decorations included three awards of the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, four Army Commendation Medals, and service medals for Korea and Vietnam. He was also awarded the Honor Medal and the Technical Medal First Class by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

When Lee retired from the military in 1982, he and Lucy built a home in Lee's boyhood town of Bishop, California. Lee became active in the Bishop Lions Club and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. Lucy served for many years as a volunteer aide at the Northern Inyo County Hospital.

Lee and Lucy were active in the Death Valley '49ers for many years. Lee chaired committees and was instrumental in creating the endowment fund that supports the '49ers scholarship program for Death Valley area

high school students. He was twice elected president of the organization, serving in that role in 1994 and 1998.

During retirement Lee and Lucy cruised the Caribbean and Russia. They also traveled extensively in their RV, both sightseeing and visiting family and friends. Their travels included Alaska, the Yukon Territory and other provinces of Canada, all of the lower 48 states, and the states of Baja California and Sonora in Mexico. They covered in excess of 150,000 overland miles.

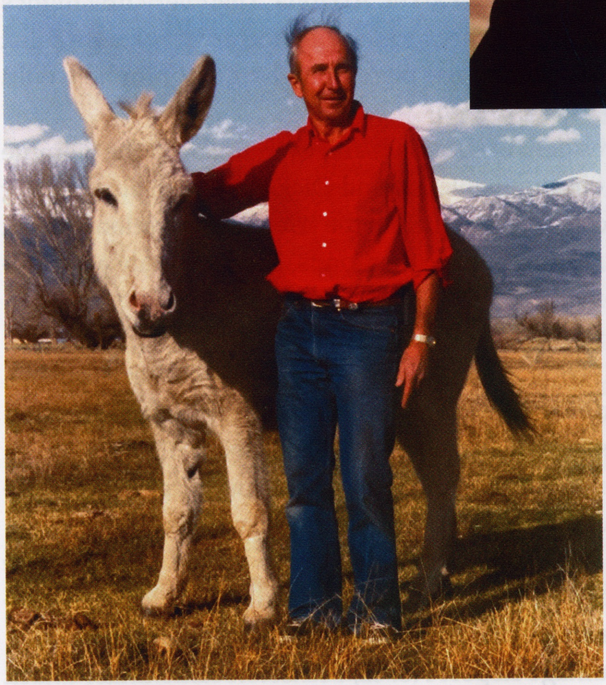
When the Crosbys sons all moved to Texas, Lucy and Lee decided to relocate one last time to be near them in their sunset years. The move allowed them to make lasting memories as a family now that they were no longer distanced by military separations.

Lee's military career is well-documented and his extensive record a point of admiration. His success was made possible by having Lucy by his side. Charming and vivacious, Lucy was never out of her element. Her family remarked that there was a glint in her eye that you would see when she issued a proclamation in such a way that made you stop and think. When you understood what she was getting to and looked back at her there would be a little grin on her face and that light in her eyes. She had a laugh that was unmistakable and the ability to converse with anyone, at any time, on any level.

Lee and Lucy were married nearly 64 years. Lee passed away on January 28, 2017 followed by Lucy on July 20, 2019. They are interred together in the West Line St. (Pioneer) Cemetery, Bishop, California, on July 27, 2021.

◆

# DICK & SUE CONN



## INTRODUCTION

I met Dick Conn on the second day of our first encampment. He and Bill Pool were wrestling with 100 lb. bags of sand for the gold panning event (I found out later). I approached and asked if I could help. I was welcomed and grabbed up instantly. They latched onto me and didn't let go, all to my benefit. After loading and unloading sand, Dick and Bill took me around to all the '49ers introducing me as the new muscle.

One of my favorite memories is of Dick picking me up in a golf cart each morning around 0800 to "go to work." First thing we did was go to the store for soft serve ice cream. I had strict orders not to tell Sue, because he would then take her in the evenings for their ice cream together. He couldn't possibly have two servings in one day! He loved his ice cream and I never told Sue.

Dick and Sue became very dear friends of ours. We visited each other whenever we could. I still worked, so we couldn't go on the camping trips that they all went on, but they would always stop and stay a few days with us when traveling back from Parker, Arizona. Their very first night's stay apparently wasn't so good, because in the morning Dick asked just exactly how many trains pass by my place at night. I told him he would get used to it.

Sue was a former president of the '49ers and even financed the 20-mule team to appear at the encampment. Sue and Dick were both such giving and kind people who contributed much to the '49ers organization. I think that's what I admired the most about the Conns. They were always helping somebody with something.

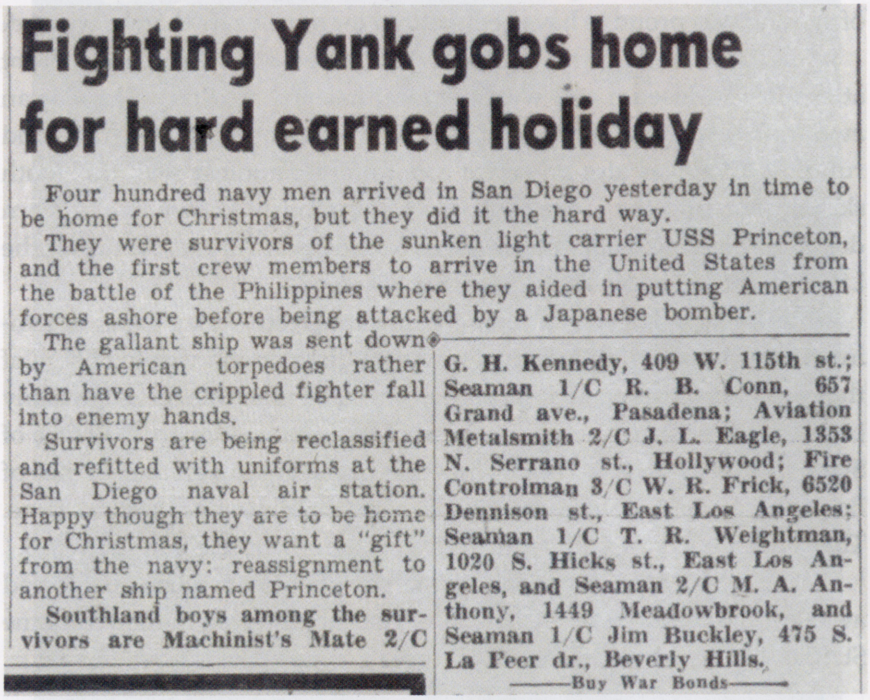
Richard Blinn "Dick" Conn was born on June 15, 1925 in Pasadena, California, to George W. Conn, a real estate broker, and Mildred Blinn. Dick's parents owned June Lake Lodge in the Eastern Sierra where Dick worked in the summers of his youth, reveling in the magnificent mountain peaks and his time spent away from the city.

During World War II, Dick served in the Navy in the South Pacific aboard the light carrier USS Princeton (CVL 23), surviving an enemy attack that resulted in casualties and the loss of his ship.

According to War Damage Report No. 62, Princeton came under attack on the morning of October 24, 1944 while participating in the Battle for Leyte Gulf off the coast of Luzon, about 150 miles east of Manila. A single enemy plane, a Japanese D4Y "Judy," dropped a 250 kg bomb about 15 feet above the ship. The bomb passed through the flight deck, went through a torpedo plane on the hangar deck, pierced the hangar and main decks, and detonated between the main and second decks.

Princeton's resulting structural damage was relatively minor, but set in motion a series of fires and munitions explosions. The ship was assisted by other ships in the carrier group in fighting the fires and rescuing personnel. Dick survived 18 hours in the water before he was finally rescued.

Even after the explosion of the bombs in the torpedo stowage, Princeton was apparently still seaworthy, but received additional damage by the escorting ships that precluded further salvage efforts. With all survivors finally removed from the ship and the water, citing tactical reasons, the Princeton was purposely sunk. Uninjured, nineteen-year-old Seaman 1st Class Conn went on to serve aboard other ships until the end of the war. These included USS Fanshaw Bay, USS Swenning, and USS Graffias.



# Fighting Yank gobs home for hard earned holiday

Four hundred navy men arrived in San Diego yesterday in time to be home for Christmas, but they did it the hard way.

They were survivors of the sunken light carrier USS Princeton, and the first crew members to arrive in the United States from the battle of the Philippines where they aided in putting American forces ashore before being attacked by a Japanese bomber.

The gallant ship was sent down by American torpedoes rather than have the crippled fighter fall into enemy hands.

Survivors are being reclassified and refitted with uniforms at the San Diego naval air station. Happy though they are to be home for Christmas, they want a "gift" from the navy: reassignment to another ship named Princeton.

Southland boys among the survivors are Machinist's Mate 2/C G. H. Kennedy, 409 W. 115th st.; Seaman 1/C R. B. Conn, 657 Grand ave., Pasadena; Aviation Metalsmith 2/C J. L. Eagle, 1353 N. Serrano st., Hollywood; Fire Controlman 3/C W. R. Frick, 6520 Dennison st., East Los Angeles; Seaman 1/C T. R. Weightman, 1020 S. Hicks st., East Los Angeles, and Seaman 2/C M. A. Anthony, 1449 Meadowbrook, and Seaman 1/C Jim Buckley, 475 S. La Peer dr., Beverly Hills.

——Buy War Bonds——

After the war, Dick returned to Southern California and went into the real estate business with his father. He later met a stunning and vivacious blonde beauty named Sue Beal.

Sue Carolyn Beal was born in Southern California on January 23, 1931,

to Tom Beal, a pharmacist, and his wife Erma. At age 19, on February 12, 1950, Sue married Dick. Dick brought Sue to his beloved Eastern Sierra where together they managed the June Lake lodge until it was sold by his parents. Dick and Sue subsequently made their home in Covina, California, where Dick purchased and operated a Union 76 service station. Sue volunteered for the Los Angeles County Health Department and several hospital auxiliaries while raising their two sons, Peter and Christopher.

In 1971, Dick and Sue snapped up an opportunity to return to the Eastern Sierra, purchasing the Inyo Shell service station and truck stop across the highway from the fairgrounds in Bishop. He retired at 55 years of age and was proud to have been retired for more years than he worked.

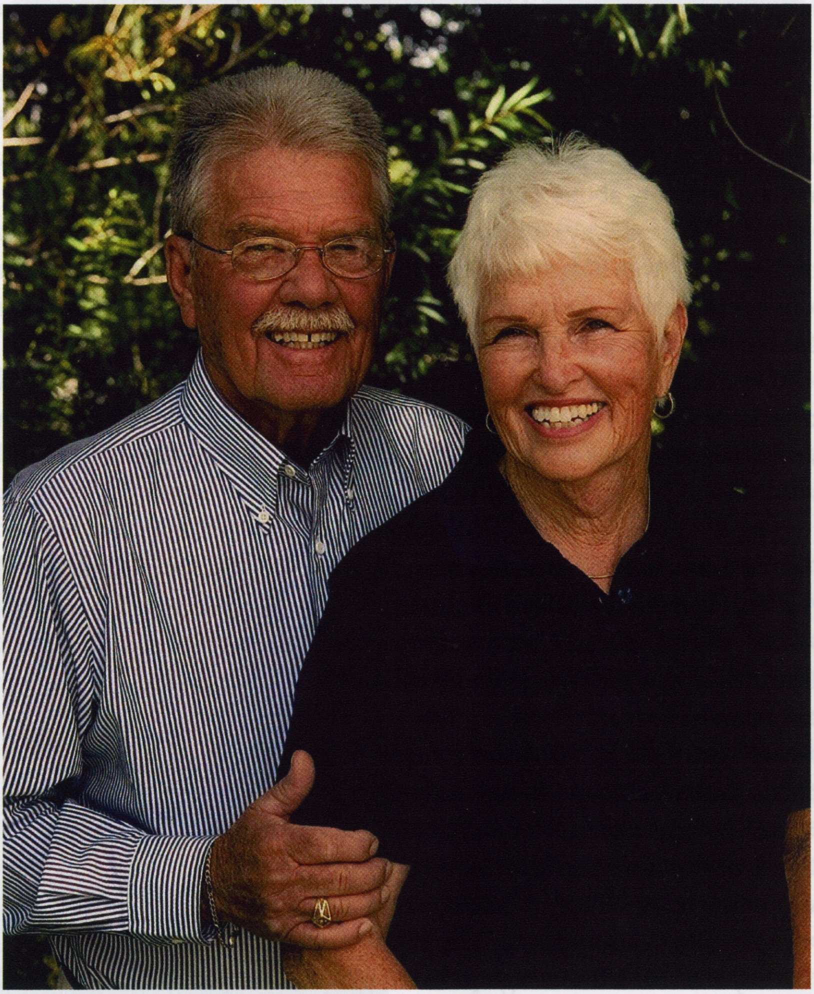
While Dick worked the service station, Sue volunteered as a docent at the Laws Museum and with the local hospital auxiliary. She was an avid athlete, playing tennis, working with the youth ski program, and running. Dick was also an active community volunteer with the youth ski program and the Lions Club. He was famously known as the "corn dog king," having made thousands of corn dogs at various events for the Lions Club food booth throughout the years.

While living in Bishop, the Conns joined the Death Valley '49ers, becoming life members in 1983. Dick served as a director and was in charge of the encampment setup and dismantle crew for a time. Sue served in many capacities as well, becoming president of the organization in 2001. One of Sue's most rewarding accomplishments was arranging an appearance of Bobby Tanner's 20 mule team to pull the original wagons of Borax fame. They appeared at the 50th anniversary encampment celebration in 1999.

Dick and Sue were married two days shy of 65 years when Sue passed away in 2015 followed by Dick in 2016. They are interred in the West Line St. (Pioneer) Cemetery, Bishop, California.

* * *

# BILL & EDIE POOL



## INTRODUCTION

Bill and Edie Pool became my friends from the get-go and we soon became like family. They both served terms as president of the '49ers.

During the encampment when we weren't otherwise working, Bill and I would drive around in the golf cart surveying the situation and making plans on how to make the encampment setup better or easier. We shared life experiences and general gab about our families, our careers, and our plans for emergency world-disaster retreat. We decided that my house would be best to gather at because of having five fenced acres.

I admired Bill for many reasons, including his passion for his country and for veterans. He was a true patriot. Whenever Bill and I would drive to Pahrump on a supply run we had a special restaurant to have breakfast that no one knew about. Haha, we had our secrets.

Bill and Edie always stopped by our house on their way to Parker, Arizona. Edie was like my second mom. She protected and defended me from cantankerous senior citizens and showed me how to conduct business for the '49ers. She always had my back.

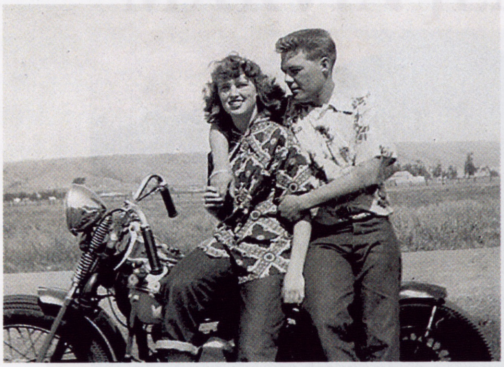
Edie was such a gracious hostess and held the annual event survival potlucks at their RV spot. We all gathered there at the end of each encampment, sharing stories and making recommendations for the next year.

Billie "Bill" R. Pool was born in Oklahoma on November 12, 1928. He moved with his family to Hayward, California, during World War II. Bill's father, Lester Pool, left behind farming to become a glassblower in a Bay Area factory while his mother, Velma, worked in a baking plant.

After graduating Hayward Union High School, Bill worked as a salt harvester. He joined the California National Guard and played center field on the 749th Ordnance Company's baseball team, helping to win the championship game against the 154th Field Artillery in 1950. Bill was a good looking, athletic guy and fell in love with the most adorable and smart gal.

Edythe "Edie" Mae Minor was born in

Texas and, like Bill, came to Hayward as a youngster with her family. She was the second daughter of Henry Minor, a building contractor, and Faye Minor. Edie met Bill in high school. After graduation, she attended banking school and subsequently worked in the financial and insurance industries for 35 years. Edie was a licensed insurance agent and member of the National Association of Insurance Women.



The high school sweethearts married on February 10, 1951. Bill and Edie had two children, Don and Carol. They became grandparents to six granddaughters and seven great-grandchildren.

Bill served a 40-year career as an Army Aircraft Maintenance Officer. Outside of her career in finance and insurance, Edie enjoyed tole painting, woodworking, gardening, and lots of golf.

In 1984, the Pools made their first trip to Death Valley and the '49er encampment. Like many others, they attended every year thereafter and became involved in planning and production. Bill became the encampment production chairman and was a valuable asset to the veterans tribute program. Edie served for several years as treasurer, was on the finance committee, and was chairperson for the 50th anniversary special program in 1999. She served as president of the organization in 2000 followed by Bill in 2006.

Bill passed away at the age of 93 on July 18, 2022, Clovis, California. He and Edie had been married 72 years.

* * *

# MARVIN JENSEN

## INTRODUCTION

When I first met Marv, I didn't quite know what his '49er role was. After talking with him I learned that he was a contributing author, historian, and curator for the organization. He has been instrumental in arranging the talks at the Furnace Creek visitor center during the encampments. He finds interesting and gifted speakers and authors to share their stories with us. Marv has also written many of the annual keepsake publications.

Marv has worked to create a '49ers section at the library in Independence. He has spent a lot of time categorizing, sorting, and stocking shelves. Marv has also worked with Furnace Creek to ensure the archives are in order. He is always working on a project of some kind. Marv is truly a dedicated '49er and a great human being.

Carl Marvin Jensen, known to most as "Marv," was born January 3, 1931 in San Francisco to Carl and Helma Jensen, two Norwegian immigrants. When Marv was two years old the family returned to Norway. Because of the Great Depression, there was little or no work for his mariner father in San Francisco. They came back to San Francisco when working conditions had improved. By then, Marv was five years old.

The Jensen family resided in the Noe Valley District where Marv attended school and participated in numerous extra-curricular activities. He was a bugler in the drum and bugle corps of his Boy Scout troop and attained the rank of Eagle Scout. Marv was also a member of a Masonic youth group, DeMolay, and played on their baseball team. In 1951, Marv began dating a teammate's sister, Mary Washington. On their first date he took Mary on her first streetcar ride to the theater to see the film "An American In Paris." This was the beginning of a wonderful 54 year relationship.

After graduation from Mission High School, Marv attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, California, and later attended Heald Engineering College in San Francisco. Upon earning his degree in Architectural Engineering in 1952, Marv was immediately drafted into the Army and sent to Fort Ord. While on leave in San Francisco, he and Mary wed. Upon completion of Advanced Infantry Training Marv was assigned to the Corps of Engineers, an extraordinary move for the Army and an apparent shock to the training captain. Infantry trainees were normally assigned to the Infantry, but Marv's degree made him more valuable elsewhere.

Marv was assigned to the 29th Engineer Base Survey Battalion and was transported aboard the USMS Barrett to the Philippines, arriving in Manila in June of 1953. When Marv and the other Army personnel got off the ship they looked around for transportation. There were Navy and Air Force buses, but no Army transport. To their surprise, they were escorted across the pier to an awaiting ship, a small freighter. Marv did not realize at that moment that he would be living on that ship for a year.

Marv was assigned to a surveyors platoon consisting of 24 surveyors, one sergeant, and one 2nd lieutenant. They surveyed portions of the coast of Mindanao, Turtle Island, Sulu Archipelago, Cagayan de Sulu, and Surigao del Norte. Every fourteen days they made three-day stops for water. Marv said that going to work was very interesting. The ship towed four landing craft, one for each squad, that would beach when possible. If beaching was not possible, the surveyors would climb into a large rubber raft and row ashore with their surveying equipment. At times they would stay in a barrio for three or four days, living in housing provided by friendly Filipinos.

At the end of their survey assignment in July 1954, the battalion was moved to Okinawa. Marv remained there for two months until his return to Fort Ord and subsequent discharge from the Army. Marv was reunited with Mary and went to work for his father-in-law's company, Washington and Mitchell, as an engineering draftsman.

A lot happened in 1957. The Jensens welcomed daughter Judy and purchased a view home in Daly City's Westlake neighborhood. They also became involved in the Death Valley '49ers. That year, an historical monument was dedicated to 1849 pioneer Harry Wade, a

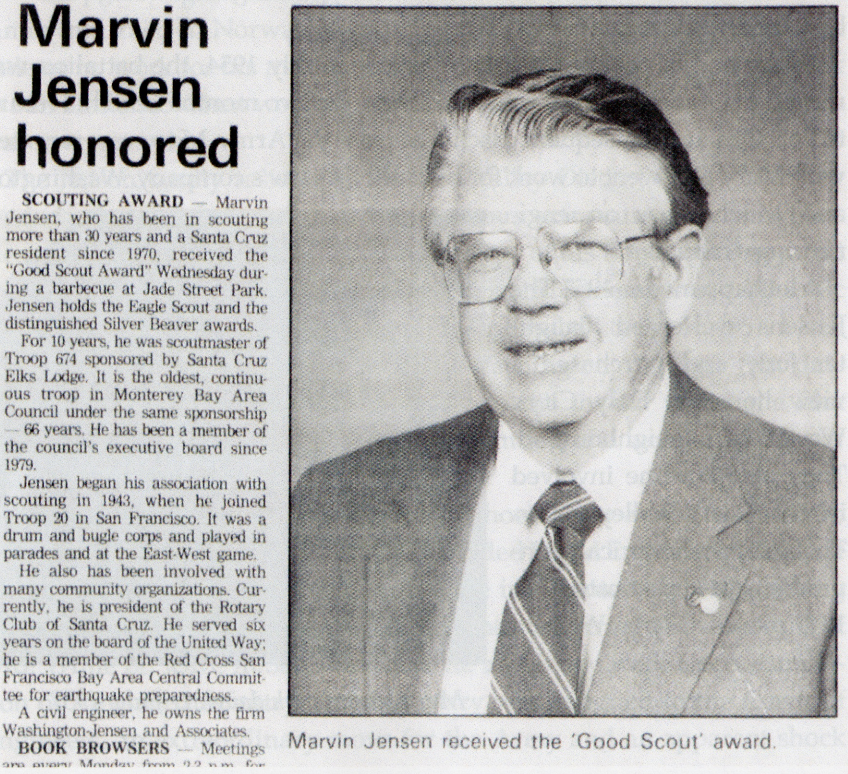
HARRY WADE EXIT ROUTE
HISTORICAL LANDMARK NO. 622

*Mary Jensen with daughter Judy, 1957*

member of the original wagon train and Mary's great-great-grandfather. Four generations of Wade descendants attended the ceremony, the youngest being nine-month-old Judy Jensen and the oldest being Lydia Ortley Hunter, aged 97.

The Jensens served as '49er advisors and directors. Mary was an expert genealogist and, sparked by interest in her Wade ancestry, eventually compiled the lineage of almost every Jayhawker as well as the members of the family wagons that crossed Death Valley in 1849. Mary not only worked backward, she and Marv worked forward on the family tree, adding son James in 1959 and daughter Janette in 1962.

From 1960 until 1970, Marv worked for visionary developer Henry Doelger as a general superintendent and structural engineer in the construction of apartments and commercial buildings. In 1970, the Jensens relocated to Santa Cruz. Marv formed a company with Mary's father that was eventually called *Washington and Jensen, Architects, Engineers and Planners*. Marv and Mary purchased a view lot on which to build their new family home. Being an engineer, Marv designed the house, drafted



# Marvin Jensen honored

**SCOUTING AWARD** — Marvin Jensen, who has been in scouting more than 30 years and a Santa Cruz resident since 1970, received the "Good Scout Award" Wednesday during a barbecue at Jade Street Park. Jensen holds the Eagle Scout and the distinguished Silver Beaver awards.

For 10 years, he was scoutmaster of Troop 674 sponsored by Santa Cruz Elks Lodge. It is the oldest, continuous troop in Monterey Bay Area Council under the same sponsorship — 66 years. He has been a member of the council's executive board since 1979.

Jensen began his association with scouting in 1943, when he joined Troop 20 in San Francisco. It was a drum and bugle corps and played in parades and at the East-West game.

He also has been involved with many community organizations. Currently, he is president of the Rotary Club of Santa Cruz. He served six years on the board of the United Way; he is a member of the Red Cross San Francisco Bay Area Central Committee for earthquake preparedness.

A civil engineer, he owns the firm Washington-Jensen and Associates.

**BOOK BROWSERS** — Meetings

Marvin Jensen received the 'Good Scout' award.

*Three generations of the Jensen family at Death Valley, 1998*

the plans, and acted as the general contractor. The Jensens were active in scouting with their children. Marv was a BSA scoutmaster and Mary was a Girl Scout leader. In the summer of 1975, Marv and seven of his scouts attended the 14th World Scout Jamboree held in Lillehammer, Norway, along with over 17,000 other scouts from 94 countries. In addition to that trip, Marv has also returned to Norway to visit his extended family a number of times throughout the years.

On October 19, 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake struck. It destroyed many buildings in the downtown area of Santa Cruz and caused much damage throughout the county. The downtown area was fenced off and business people could not enter their buildings to remove merchandise or business files without being accompanied by an engineer. The engineer had to sign an agreement with the city accepting full responsibility for the safety of the business owner and to hold the city harmless. Marv was one of only three engineers willing to do so and for two months volunteered his time to help the business owners. Marv was appointed to the *Red Cross San Francisco Bay Area Earthquake Recovery Committee* to ensure that donations were appropriately channeled to the Santa Cruz community.

In addition to engineering, Marv also worked as a professional photographer for the Port of San Francisco from 1995 to 2008. When Marv retired, he remained active in Rotary Club, Elks Club, his church, and many other organizations.

In May 2005, after 52 years of marriage, Mary passed away from cancer. Fellow '49er and friend Bob Malley also passed away that year. Marv thought it doubtful that Bob's wife, Bev, would remain active in the organization, but to his surprise she did. Over the next few years friends Marv and Bev acknowledged that traveling alone was not much fun. Sharing common interests, they enjoyed a few trips together and drew closer to one another. Marv and Bev married on March 10, 2010.

Marv maintains his home in Santa Cruz while Bev maintains hers in Gardnerville, Nevada. They still enjoy traveling and participating in the '49ers. Marv served as president in 2007 and Bev in 2012. Marv is currently the organization's historian and a passionate promoter of the pioneer history of Death Valley.

Badwater
ELEV. - 282 ft.

* * *

# BEVERLY MALLEY

## INTRODUCTION

Bev Malley is a really hard worker and a dedicated '49er. She served as president of the organization in 2012 and co-authored that year's keepsake publication. For many years Bev has overseen the membership administration and has spent tireless hours manning the membership booth during the encampments. Her work doesn't stop when an encampment ends; she communicates with members and potential members throughout the year.

What I like and admire the most about Bev is that she always has an ear to listen. When faced with challenges, she figures out solutions and never criticizes. She just works through it and goes on. Bev is helpful to everyone and an invaluable '49er, really an all-around great person who aims to make the organization better year after year. Both Bev and her husband Marv Jensen are fine folks in my book.

Beverly Marie Abbott was welcomed into the world on April 13, 1938 in Glendale, California. She grew up in nearby Burbank. Upon graduation from Burbank High School in 1955, Bev trained on the job at a local dentist office. She said with a smile, "I was a dental assistant right there in Beautiful Downtown Burbank."

In March 1956, Bev married her childhood sweetheart and the love of her life, Bob Malley. He was serving in the United States Air Force and was soon deployed to Japan for 18 months. Bev stayed behind in California and continued to work until Bob's return. They then moved together to Topeka, Kansas, where Bob was stationed for the remainder of his enlistment. "What a change and shock Kansas was for this Southern California girl who had never lived out of Burbank" remarked Bev. "Three tornados went over Topeka that year. Each time there were warnings we ran to the underground shelter." Their first son, Scott, was born in Kansas.

Upon Bob's discharge from the military, the Malleys returned to their beloved California where they purchased their first home in the San Fernando Valley. They welcomed a second son, Michael Brent, followed by a daughter, Kimberly. When the children were all in school full time, Bev went to nursing school and became a licensed nurse. She worked in a variety of settings, including hospitals, clinics, home health, and schools.

Always an ambitious couple, the Malleys built and opened a gift store in the mountain recreational community of Pine Mountain in the Los Padres National Forest near Frazier Park, California. Bev operated the store for 11 years while also working as a nurse. For recreation — and being a gal that always wanted a horse — Bev got a beauty named Sassy. She said, "I learned all about horse care and enjoyed many wonderful rides on the mountain trails. Sassy became my best friend and hobby. She was a wonderful companion."

In 1995, the Malleys sold the store and moved north to beautiful Lake Tahoe for a "quieter life." As Bev fondly reminisced, "It was a real dream come true. We bought a home overlooking the lake and Heavenly Ski Resort. I enjoyed the beautiful snowfalls." Always a busy lady, Bev got a job at the local hospital in home health care. She also worked as a school nurse at both Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley in Nevada.

In the summers Bev hiked to some of the many lakes and beautiful areas in the Sierra Nevada. She also took fun classes at the community college. In the fall she took classes on wine. Bev laughed, "I totally ruined my budget on exceptional wines while learning about enology and viticulture." In the winter she and Bob had fun in the snow and took ski lessons. Bev admits, "I couldn't get past the bunny hill. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing became the answer for this girl raised in Southern California." The Malleys later moved to the Eastern Sierra in the Carson Valley of Nevada where they continued to enjoy the mountains and the rural setting.

Bob and Bev purchased a motorhome and began traveling. Their very close friend, Lynn Fry, persuaded them to come down to Death Valley for the '49ers encampment. Lynn was in his nineties and had been a member for many years. The Malleys thought it sounded fun and away they went. "We camped next to Lynn in Sunset campground and what a wonderful time we had," said Bev. "He showed us all the sights in Death Valley." They joined the Death Valley '49ers on that first visit and attended the encampment every year thereafter. Bev volunteered in membership sales and Bob became a director.

Bob and Bev really loved the Death Valley '49ers and were both dedicated to the organization. Though Bob sadly passed away in 2005, Bev was determined to carry on with the '49ers. At the time she resolved, "This is where I need to be." She learned to drive and maintain the motorhome, even remaining active in and traveling with the Winnebago Travelers club. Bev thought, "I need to keep on living and doing the hobbies we both so enjoyed," so away she went.

In 2007, while serving as chairman of membership, Bev developed a closer friendship with sitting president of the '49ers, Marvin Jensen. Bev and Marv shared many interests, including their dedication to the organization, and eventually married in 2010. They bought a larger Winnebago to have more room for the two of them and their Labrador retriever, Kari.

The Death Valley '49ers elected Bev as their president in 2012. She said it was a pleasure and an honor to serve at the helm. Bev has also served in numerous other roles within the organization and continues her role in membership. "I have learned so much from many of the '49ers that came before me and demonstrated their dedication, knowledge, and professionalism. Many friendships have formed between long-time dedicated volunteers," said Bev.

Beyond their frequent travel to Death Valley, Bev and Marv have taken numerous cruises and two trips to Norway where Bev had the pleasure of meeting many of Marv's very hospitable relatives. Bev proudly shared, "We have also taken a couple of trips to Boston where my oldest grandson, Timothy, ran the Boston Marathon. What a proud grandmother I was!" On one particularly special trip they ventured to Central and South America. Bev and Marv hiked at Machu Picchu in the Peruvian Andes.

Bev has enjoyed a wonderful life and stays as active as possible with family and friends. She said, "I still like camping with the '49ers!"

* * *

# TED & LETHA TATRO

## INTRODUCTION

Ted and Letha Tatro are a special couple and adore each other. Letha was president of the '49ers during a particularly tough year. In 2013, the federal government shutdown caused the park service to close the campgrounds and cancel a lot of programs. On the Sunday before the encampment the campgrounds were finally reopened and programs reinstated. Letha took it all in stride and it happened to work out.

As dedicated '49ers, the Tatros both held officer positions. They ran several encampment events, including gold panning and the pampered pet parade. Letha got so much joy from that pet parade. They both did. They really loved the organization for as long as they could travel.

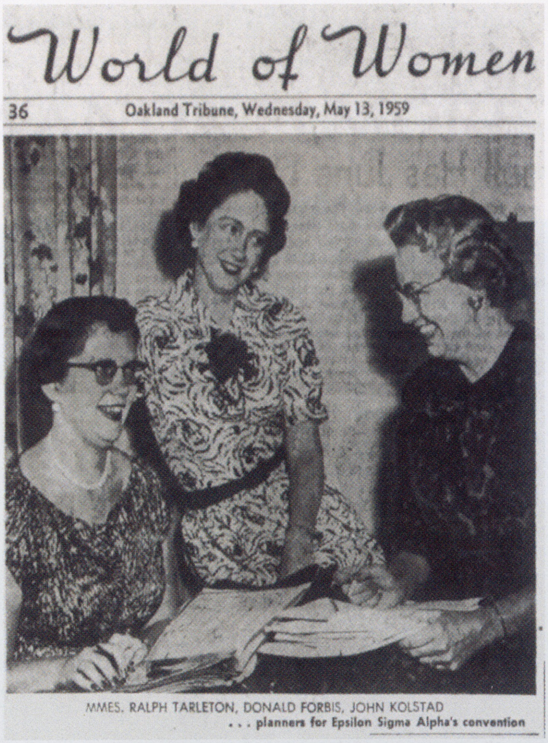
Mini and I were privileged enough to host them at our place when they would travel. Being that our house is on the way to everywhere, we got to spend time with them. Ted was such a comedian. Whenever I would call, he would say he was "just getting out of the hot tub" or "just coming in from waxing the car." He always had a joke to tell.

Ted was also a skilled handyman. He knew everything. He had been a contractor, a dock worker, and had learned many other trades as well. He helped Mini and I a lot with our rentals whenever they came to visit.

Letha Bernice Alsgood was born on April 14, 1929 in Oakland, California, and attended public schools there. In her youth, her parents owned a "mom and pop" grocery store. Her mother later taught school, eventually becoming a school principal in Oakland. Letha learned to play the piano and was a Camp Fire Girl.

After high school, Letha attended San Francisco State College where she joined the Epsilon Sigma Alpha sorority. She married fellow student and Navy veteran Ralph Colby Tarleton on her twentieth birthday. Letha and Ralph graduated together and Letha

AND MRS. RALPH COLBY TARLETON are pictured
wedding on April 14 in Oakland, Calif. The former Honol
is the former Miss Letha Bernice Alsgood of Oakland.
ing at 470 Mandana Blvd., Oakland.


World of Women

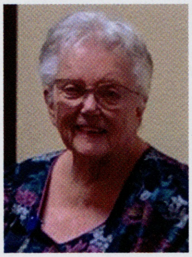
36 Oakland Tribune, Wednesday, May 13, 1959

MMES. RALPH TARLETON, DONALD FORBIS, JOHN KOLSTAD
. . . planners for Epsilon Sigma Alpha's convention

became a school teacher. She and Ralph had two daughters, Sue Ann and Nancy Lee. While balancing teaching and parenting, Letha also remained active in Epsilon Sigma Alpha. She was ultimately elected president of the California State Council.

In 1981, Ralph passed away at age 55 from cancer. Letha continued teaching and remained actively involved with family, friends, and many volunteer organizations.

In 1986, Letha met Ted Tatro at a Shrine event. They got to know each other better while working together in many Masonic groups and events, including the Shrine annual holiday party where Letha helped Ted with the chairmanship. After a long friendship they married in 1993.

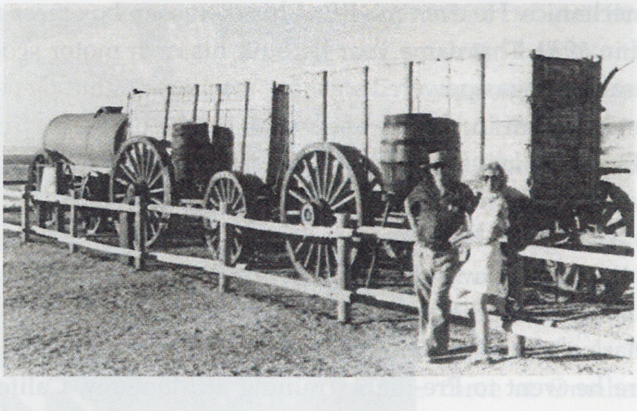


The Tatros served their church, their local volunteer fire department, their Masonic family, and the Death Valley '49ers. Ted and Letha helped the '49ers in many ways, including selling memberships, chairing the pampered pet parade, co-chairing the gold panning competition, and simply helping out wherever they were needed. They enjoyed traveling with their RV and attending encampments for as long as they could.

Ted and Letha enjoyed living in the Sierra-Nevada before retiring to the Masonic Home at Union City, California.

* * *

# GENE & WANDA ELMORE



# INTRODUCTION

Gene Elmore is a remarkable man, an amazing person, and a great guy. I have spent many hours just sitting and chatting with him. He is also a war hero veteran, which I so admire.

Each year for the encampment Gene and Wanda drive a motorhome from San Diego to Death Valley. Being that our place is on the way, we encourage them to make it their overnight stop. Mini and I enjoy their company a lot. I admit that I stress out until I see them pull into the yard. Every year!

Wanda is a past president. I first became acquainted with her when helping on the production crew. With the art and vendor show she required a lot of gear to be set up and taken down. Wanda is a dedicated and very admirable '49er. She is devoted to making a success of the encampment, however she can.

We spend a lot of time together planning for the upcoming events. When Bill and Edie Pool couldn't come anymore, Wanda stepped up and hosted the survivor potlucks at their camp. She is an amazing hostess.

The Elmores are gracious and hospitable folks and a pleasure to be around. It's my absolute honor to call them my friends.

Owen Eugene "Gene" Elmore was born in Danville, Indiana, on December 31, 1923, the son of Dewey Elmore, a dairyman, and Dorothy Cline. As a youth Gene was inclined toward engineering and mechanics. He even modified his own soap box racer for a first-place win in 1939. That same year he built his own motor scooter powered by a salvaged gas-powered washing machine engine. Gene's mother tried to interest him in playing the piano, but he opted for tinkering in his friend's garage and body shop instead. He worked newspaper routes and many odd jobs, including selling programs at the Indy 500, so that he could buy a car at age 16.

Gene joined the Navy after his 18th birthday, mere weeks after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He began basic pilot training in the inaugural class of the War Training Service program at Ball State College. From there he went to Pre-flight Training at Monterey, California, and on to Primary Training at Norman, Oklahoma, where he flew open cockpit Stearman biplanes. Next, Gene went to the Naval Air Training

Command (NATC), Corpus Christi, Texas, where he learned to fly the SNV Valiant. He graduated NATC and was commissioned as an ensign in the Navy Reserve in 1943. While most cadets wanted to fly fighters, Gene was attracted to the big aircraft. He was initially assigned to fly the PBY Catalina, a twin-engine flying boat, and received additional training at Jacksonville, Florida.

Gene was then sent to New York for transport to England. After a 15-day zig-zag across the Atlantic aboard a crowded troop ship with night-time black-out orders, they reached England. Gene joined a patrol squadron at Dunkeswell where he flew the Consolidated B-24 Liberator and PB2Y-4 Coronado aircraft. After serving five missions as navigator to Lt. Joe Kennedy (oldest brother of John F. Kennedy), Gene moved into the co-pilot's seat for five weeks. He was then designated Plane Commander with his own crew.

Whenever weather prohibited a return to the American base in Dunkeswell, Gene would divert to an RAF base east of London. It was on those occasions that he got to fly the RAF Spitfire, a huge difference from the heavy bombers and a bit of fun. In May 1944, toward the end of a long and boring patrol over a mostly-empty English Channel, Gene and his crew spotted and sank an enemy submarine off the coast of Normandy. It was Gene's first encounter with the enemy and the heavy feeling of being the one to drop the depth charges stayed with him.

At the beginning of June 1944, a supply of 500-pound bombs arrived. Until then all the pilots had ever dropped were depth charges, which required a different technique entirely. At 1:00 a.m. on June 6, without time to practice how to drop bombs, the D-Day operation began. Gene and his crew flew over the English Channel, that was now choked with ships, and straight to Normandy. They completed six bombing missions that day — three at Utah Beach and three at Omaha beach — dropping 12 bombs behind enemy lines on each

run. Gene recalled, "In the daylight hours seeing those men wading in, war was hell for them." He made an additional three runs per day for the next six days, taking shots from small arms fire. With his work in England finished, Gene returned home to visit his family before assignment to the Pacific to fly the PB4Y-2 Privateer.

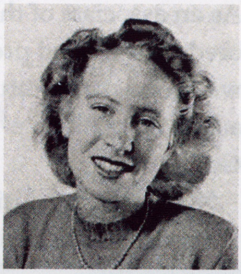
In August 1944, Gene was sent to the Pacific as aerial support for amphibious operations. His mission was to find and sink enemy patrol boats while dodging the persistent threat of Imperial Japanese Zeroes. In early 1945, he flew support at Iwo Jima, strafing the enemy to provide cover for damaged planes that had ditched in the water. Again, Gene recalled seeing the Marines wading in on the beach. He said, "I was so glad to be flying. They were the real heroes." Gene was then ordered to inactive duty and returned home to Indiana in December 1945.

In 1946, Gene enrolled at Purdue University to work toward a degree in engineering. He continued his Reserve duty and also worked as a flight instructor. Gene's friend introduced him to Margaret "Marge" Switzer. Gene and Marge soon married and had their son Jack in 1947.

In 1948, Gene took leave from his job at P.R. Mallory to fly the Berlin Airlift, a monumental humanitarian operation. In 15 months he flew 162 missions, helping to deliver much needed food, coal, and other supplies to Berliners suffering from the Soviet blockade. Gene was again called up to serve during the Korean War. Most of his flight time was spent charting icebergs over Iceland and Greenland to keep the shipping channels open.

In 1953, Gene was back to inactive duty and again working at P.R. Mallory. Given the shortage of homes, he and Marge bought a lot and built their own house in Indianapolis. In 1960, they welcomed their second son, Jim. They lived there happily until 1967 when Marge tragically passed away. Jack was in college, but Jim was still quite young. Marge's mother stepped in to care for Jim. With her help, Gene was able to remain a commander in the Reserve as well as becoming chief design engineer at RCA.

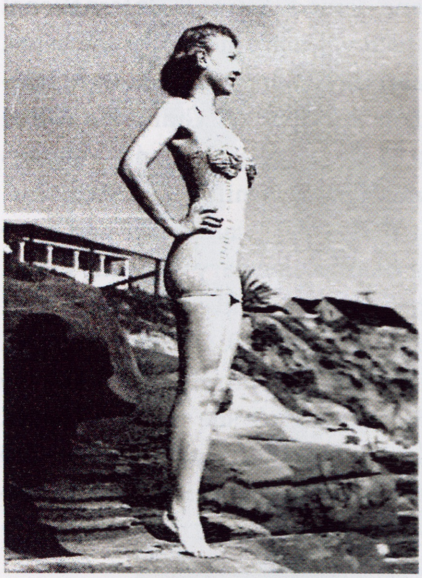
Elwanda "Wanda" Ruth Edgil was born the youngest of six children on a farm near Jasper, Alabama. "Daddy built a long rambling farm house with a tin roof on which I loved to hear the rain splattering," she recalled.



As a child Wanda had the bug for music. She played piano and loved to sing.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor everything changed. Many of Wanda's family began migrating west. Eventually, all of her siblings had moved to Southern California. On May 21, 1945, her sixteenth birthday, Wanda boarded a very crowded troop train with her mother and sister, Dottie, and came to San Diego. Though sick with a cold for most of the trip, Wanda was cared for by her mother as well as all the nice boys in uniform.

At Point Loma High School, Wanda was on the "pom-pom" squad and sang in the choir. She worked as a sales clerk introducing S and H Green Stamps and waited tables in the family-owned Streamliner Café. After graduating, Wanda attended Nazarene College and San Diego Business College. She also enrolled in the Dorothy Powers Modeling School and searched for a steady job. In her free time, Wanda loved the beach, roller skating, and dancing to the big bands at the many local ballrooms and clubs.



Wanda's motto is "bloom where you are planted." She did just that when she was hired as a secretary and bookkeeper at L. E. Burner Auto Repair and Paint Shop. She was the only girl among a workforce of males, learning to hold her own and gaining great confidence.

Wanda met veteran and pilot Harold "Hal" Beckwith, a customer at the body shop who worked at Convair. After a brief courtship they married in 1955. As a technical representative for the F-102 fighters, Hal received orders to various air bases around the country, affording them the experience of living in many different places. From 1960 to 1965 Wanda and Hal lived in Japan.

With a curious mind and a penchant for learning, Wanda studied flower arranging and machine knitting while in Japan, earning teaching certificates in both. In the base hobby shop she learned ceramics and lapidary.

As an associate of the 500-member Officers Wives Club, Wanda was honored to be elected president. It was a magical time for her in Japan and life was good. After returning to California, Wanda was stunned when Hal asked for a divorce. Her heartbreak wouldn't last long for she soon met Gene.

Not long after losing his first wife, Gene was sent on his annual two week active duty stint at the Naval Air Station, North Island Coronado. While out with a friend one evening at a club, he met Wanda and they danced. It was love at first sight for even 2,000 miles could not keep them apart. They were married on November 11, 1967 in Gene's home town of Indianapolis. The following summer they moved to San Diego and established Tele Camera, a security camera business.

Gene joined Kiwanis International and held various offices over the years. He and three other veterans were honored in 2021 by the Grantville-Allied Gardens Kiwanis with a plaque at the Mount Soledad National Veterans Memorial for their dedication to Kiwanis and their military service.

In 1980, the Elmores attended their first '49er encampment and have not missed one since, always spending their anniversary in Death Valley. They have been '49er associates, advisors, directors, and committee chairs. Wanda served as president of the organization in 2010. She has continued to support both the art show and the scholarship program. In 2007, she organized and chaired the '49ers vendor show, a role she continues today.

Gene is the author of several books, including a 2011 memoir of his life and military career. He and Wanda are likely the two busiest nonagenarians one could ever have the pleasure to meet.

* * *

# BOB & DONNIS LOGSDON

## INTRODUCTION

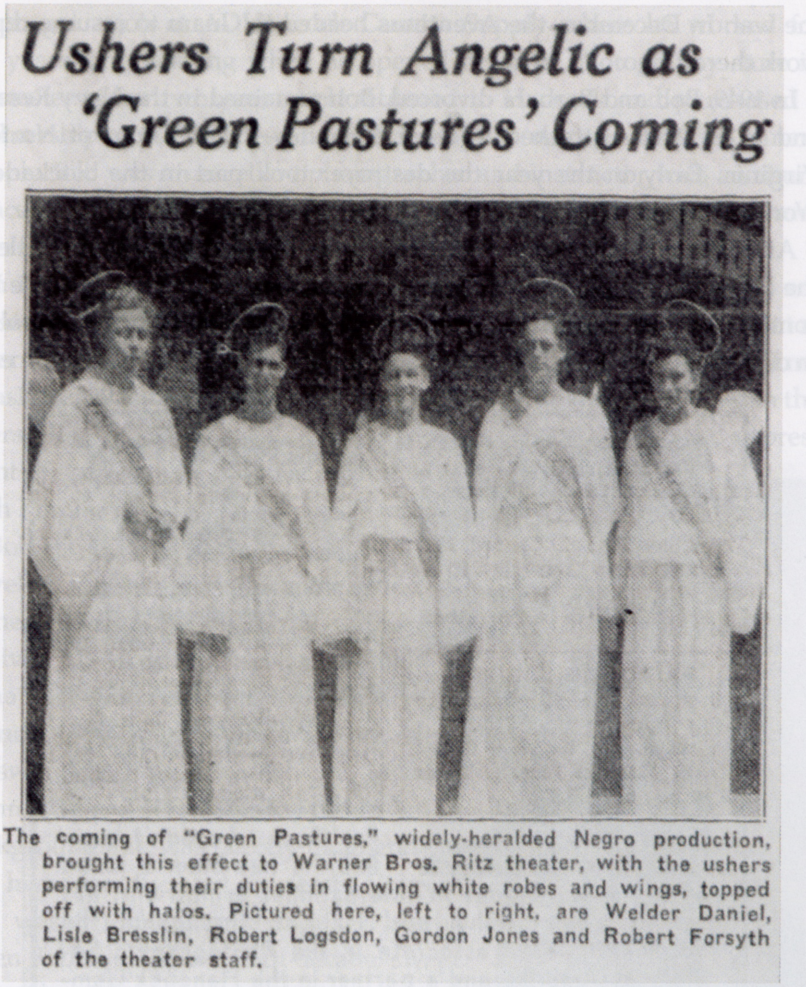
Bob Logsdon. What a man; a triple war veteran, a longtime '49er, and a great guy. Remarkably, Bob lived to be 101 years old. He probably attended more encampments than anyone, having been at the centennial celebration in 1949 and remaining a '49er member for 69 years. He celebrated his own centennial at Death Valley, driving to the encampment at Furnace Creek in his RV with his bride at age 100.

I first met Bob and Donnis when Bob was nearing 90. Each year I was stressed until I saw his 30 ft. RV pull into the campground. I remember asking him if he could see over the dash, because he sat so scrunched down in the seat. You couldn't see his head at all when you were looking in through the windshield. He said he didn't need to see much anyway. I then asked him how his driving reflexes were, given his age. He quipped, "Well, they have bumps on the right and the left sides of the road to let you know when you are veering over the line." I laughed, but quickly realized it was the truth and not a joke. Whenever he got to Baker, Donnis had to drive because the road didn't have rumble strips to alert him that he was out of the lane and off into the dirt.

Bob was a very active member and took photos of the encampment activities each year. During the quarterly meetings he would share the photos on his slide projector. We so enjoyed them. He photographed many of the portraits of the '49er presidents that were displayed on the walls at Stovepipe Wells. He also provided many of the Death Valley photos on display around the ranch and the inn.

It was such a pleasure to have known both Bob and Donnis. She, too, was a remarkable person who lovingly cared for him. When Bob passed, I had the distinct honor to speak at his memorial service. I was moved to share my thoughts about this man, a hero in my book.

Robert "Bob" Lincoln Logsdon, Jr. was born on September 1, 1917, San Bernardino, California. Bob's father was a railroad conductor who soon moved the family back to Paducah, Kentucky, where Bob grew up. After high school, in 1935, Bob returned to San Bernardino and lived with his aunt while attending San Bernardino Valley College and working as an usher at the Ritz Theater. Ever the good sport, in 1936 Bob appeared in costume for the release of "Green Pastures."



# Ushers Turn Angelic as 'Green Pastures' Coming

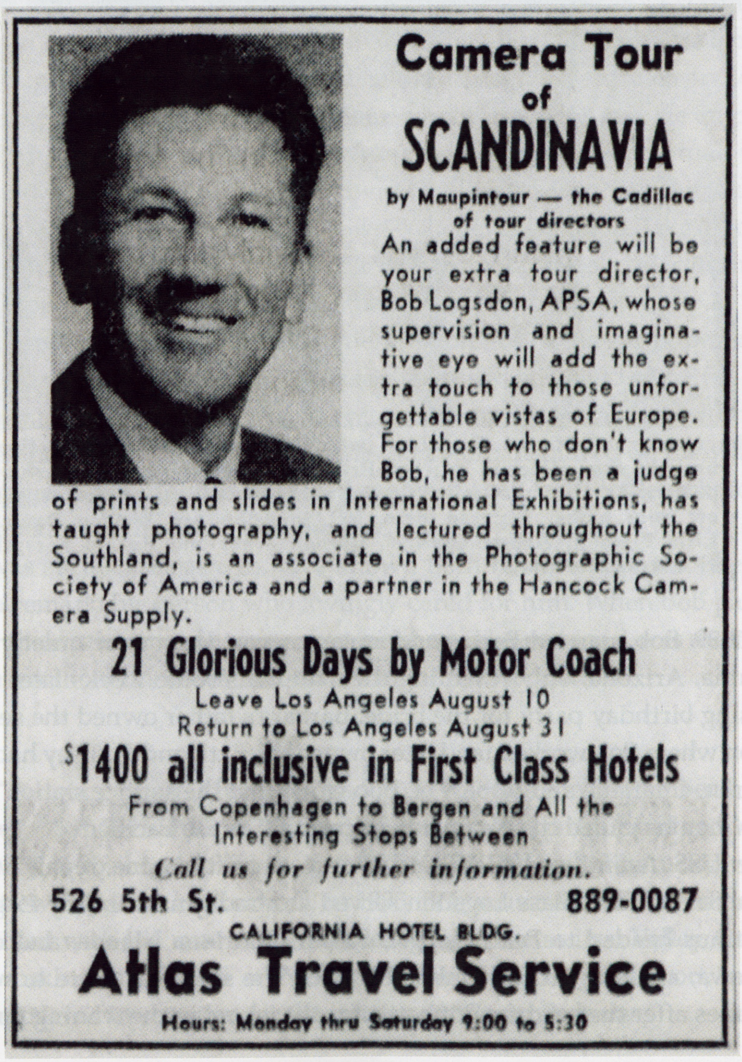
The coming of "Green Pastures," widely-heralded Negro production, brought this effect to Warner Bros. Ritz theater, with the ushers performing their duties in flowing white robes and wings, topped off with halos. Pictured here, left to right, are Welder Daniel, Lisle Bresslin, Robert Logsdon, Gordon Jones and Robert Forsyth of the theater staff.

In 1939, Bob married Barbara Muenzenmeyer. They were quietly wed in Yuma, Arizona, only revealing their nuptials some weeks later at an amusing birthday party for the bride. Barbara's father owned the service station where Bob worked (and later owned) at Sixth and H. They had two children, Charlene and Robert H. Bob worked at the service station until 1945 when he joined the Navy and shipped off to the Pacific.

The USS Aventinus (ARVE-3) was an aircraft engine repair vessel where Seaman 1st Class Logsdon served as a radarman. In July 1945 the Aventinus headed to Pearl Harbor, Saipan, Mariana Islands, and on to Okinawa, arriving on September 15, 1945. The ship was there to repair airplanes after the hard-fought battle for the island in the waning days of the war. In December, the Aventinus headed to Guam to resume repair work there.

In 1949, Bob and Barbara divorced. Bob remained in the Navy Reserve and in 1952 was attached to the USS Laffey (DD-724) out of Norfolk, Virginia. Early in the year the destroyer took part in the blockade of Wonsan in Korea.

After Korea Bob returned stateside and married Ruth Brewster Sidler in the Navy chapel at Washington, D.C. Ruth held down the fort while Bob continued to serve in the Navy Reserve. Before he retired he was involved in one more war as a chief operations specialist during the Vietnam era.



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Bob got a job at Al Hancock Camera Supply where he worked for ten years, only leaving when he opened his own photography store in Lancaster. After two years, Bob returned to Hancock and purchased a partnership in the business, later changing the name to Empire Camera Supply. Bob was an excellent photographer and instructor with an abundance of energy and charisma. He led workshops, held exhibitions, and received many awards for his work.

In 1949, Bob attended the Death Valley centennial celebration. He entered and won a photography contest there, repeating this achievement at several successive encampments. Bob laughed, "They finally got rid of me by asking me to run the contest." That was how he became involved in the '49ers. His participation didn't end there. Bob stepped up to serve as president of the '49ers in 1976. He retired from both Empire and the Navy Reserve in 1977.

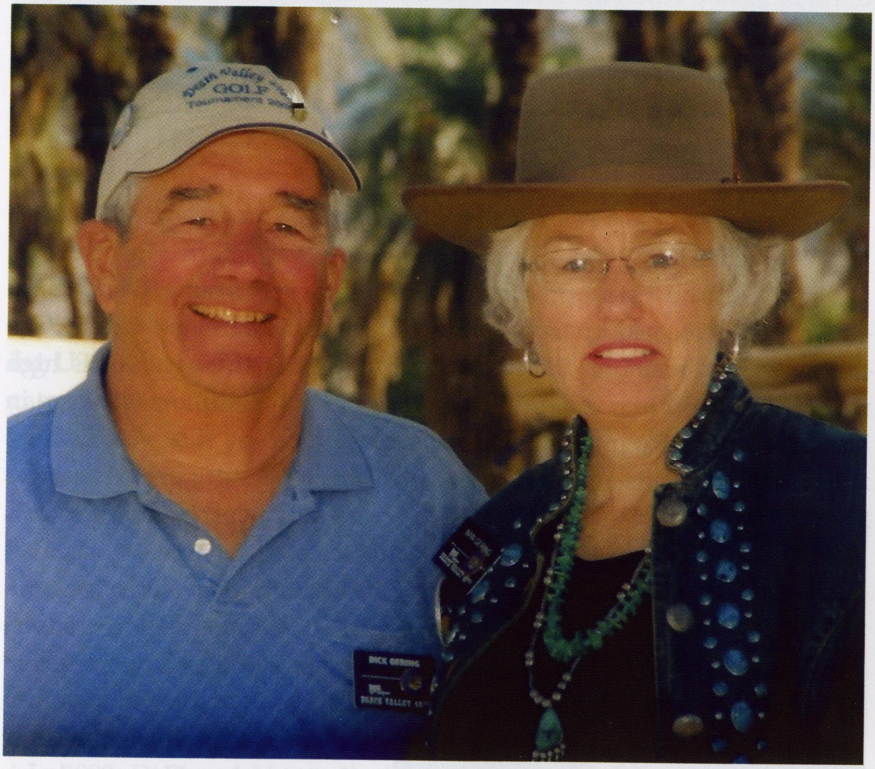
Bob and Ruth were married for 51 years, traveling and photographing the world together until Ruth passed away in 2004.

Given his advanced age Bob planned to remain single. However, he struck up a friendship with fellow Rotarian and businesswoman Donnis Kenworthy Meeder. Donnis came from a building construction background and was fiercely independent. She had been divorced for nearly 40 years and wasn't looking to change her status when Bob, then in his ninth decade, swept her off her feet. At a time when many may be tempted to throw in the towel, Bob and Donnis married. It was 2009. After his death in 2018, Donnis remarked that Bob had given her the best 10 years of her life.

Mrs. Donnis Meeder
. . . WIC president

*Robert Whipple with Bob Logsdon*

# DICK & NAN GERING


GOLF
DICK GERING

# INTRODUCTION

Dick Gering has served the '49ers well. He has been president, on the production crew, and golf chairman. He and Nan are so helpful, courteous, and kind. When I was a newbie in the '49ers, Dick and Nan were instrumental in getting me to join the board and start moving up through the chairs to president. They also had connections to get me included in the black-tie events at the inn, which was my first black-tie event ever. Wow, was I impressed.

Dick worked very hard with the encampment production for the success of the event. He also acted as the relay person with Dick and Sue Conn in Bishop when the Conns couldn't travel anymore.

Nan served as the '49ers secretary for a long time. She recorded the minutes, issued the mailings, and also handled the quilt auction. She even had connections with quilt ladies to make special quilts for the '49ers. Dick and Nan have truly been instrumental to the success of the '49ers.

Richard "Dick" Thomas Gering was born in Beloit, Wisconsin, on May 27, 1941. While very young, Dick's family relocated to Aurora, Illinois, where his parents went into the retail grocery business. Dick remained in Aurora throughout his high school years and into college, graduating in 1963 from Loras College in Dubuque with a BA in economics.

In 1963, Dick enlisted in the US Army Reserve, serving for 30 years as a medical service officer. His various assignments included administrative officer, personnel officer, a medical platoon leader in an armor battalion, command and general staff instructor, and a medical clinic administrator. He served primarily at Ft. McCoy. Outside of the Army Reserve, Dick was employed for 21 years with the U.S. Dept. of Labor (USDL) Wage and Hour Division at

*Ron Midlikoski, Dick Gering, Dennis Harders, and Matt Kingsley*

Madison, Wisconsin.

Dick met Nancy "Nan" Steveling and they married in 1985. After leaving USDL, he spent a short period in real estate and as a private investigator. Dick eventually joined Nan in running her ceramics studio. They worked alongside one another for five years.

By 1990, Nan gave up the ceramics business and convinced Dick to accept an active duty special work (ADSW) assignment through Ft. McCoy. Seasonally, May to September, Dick was a clinic administrator. The rest of the year the he and Nan were able to travel throughout the country in their motorhome. Dick next accepted a 13-month tour of duty, spending four months as a clinic administrator, five months as a battalion CO for an operation named Desert Fix, and the remaining four months as the clinic administrator and personnel officer for Desert Fix.

In 1993, Dick and Nan took their motorhome to Yuma, Arizona, and while there Dick received his 30 year letter informing him that he was being retired from the Army Reserve. He then looked for civilian employment and became director of the Yuma Community Food Bank for two years. While at Yuma, some friends invited Dick and Nan to come to Death Valley and visit them there.

Nan quickly fell in love with Furnace Creek and even accepted a job there. She and Dick moved to Furnace Creek Ranch (now known as the Ranch at Death Valley) and spent close to five years working in various positions. Nan served for a time as the ranch spokeswoman. That's how they became involved with the '49ers.

Dick became a '49ers board member and was elected president in 2008. Nan served as both a director and as the organization's secretary. They eventually set down roots at Lone Pine, California. Beyond his work with the '49ers, Dick has been actively involved with Lions Club, Southern Inyo Hospital Board of Directors, the Lone Pine Museum of Western Film History, and the Lone Pine Film Festival.

* * *

# NORM NOFTSIER

## INTRODUCTION

Norm Noftsier is an awesome cowboy. His wife, Mary Jo, is pretty awesome, too. Norm was the wagon master for Corral 14 for many years. Among their various trips by horse-drawn (or mule-drawn) wagons, Norm and Mary Jo led the wagon train through Death Valley for many years.

On our second or third trip to the encampment, Mini and I got to take our grandkids with us. They were so amazed at the wagon train. Norm told the audience that he couldn't wait to get to camp and "pop a top on a cool one." It was pretty hot that day, so my grandson wanted us to take him some beer for a treat. Later in the afternoon, we went to their campsite to deliver the beer. We introduced ourselves and instantly became friends.

Norm told my grandson that if he came the next year, he could ride in the wagon down the hill from the inn with them to the ranch. That boy was ecstatic. As promised, the following year my grandson did ride in that wagon with Norm and Mary Jo. Oh my goodness, that boy was in heaven. He will remember that for the rest of his life, as will I. Norm has made a tremendous impression on my family and I am forever grateful for his kindness.

Among the many talents that Mary Jo is known for, is her remarkable ability as an author. She has written many books and journals while on their wagon trips. It's some great reading. She is truly a gifted person.

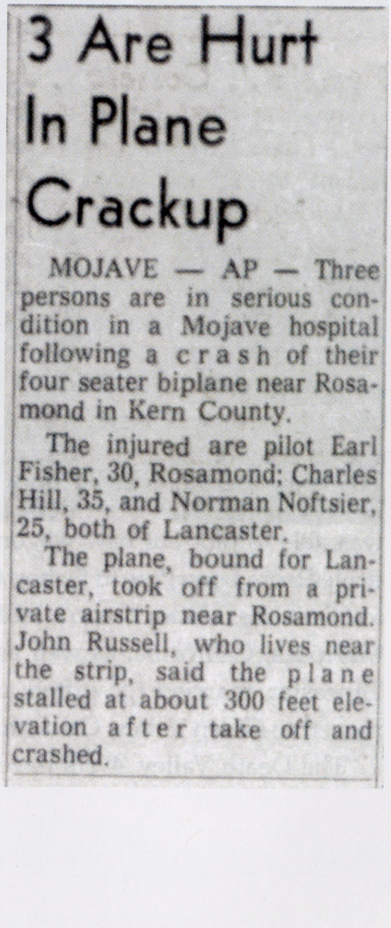
Norman "Norm" J. Noftsier was born in upstate New York in a farming town called Beaver Falls, September 24, 1935. His father passed away when Norm was just thirteen months old, leaving his mother to raise two boys and two girls on her own. She remarried when Norm was age 10. The new couple bought a rundown farm and began farming.

Norm said they didn't have a tractor, but worked the land with a team of horses. They also bought some dairy cows. Norm's days were spent planting and mowing hay, milking cows, and hauling firewood out of the woods. The family sold the farm when Norm was about 13. He then went to work on a cousin's farm when he was 14 years old and stayed until age 16. Norm then worked as a veterinarian's helper until he was just over 17 and joined the Air Force in 1953.

After basic training, Norm was sent to aircraft mechanic school in Amarillo, Texas. He was then assigned to Edwards Air Force Base in the Antelope Valley. Norm arrived at Edwards around midnight to total darkness with not a light in sight. He later recalled, "I was ushered to a barracks and when I woke the next morning could not believe the view of the dry lake. It was the shock of a lifetime to go from where I was raised with trees, grass, and water to nothing but desert."

At Edwards, Norm worked on the B-47 Stratojet bomber, F-86 Sabrejet, and the T-33 Shooting Star. It was an exciting time in the era of testing future aircraft. While there, Norm married in 1955 and started a family, eventually becoming a father to two girls and two boys.

Upon his discharge from the Air Force in 1957, Norm immediately went to work as a civilian for Republic Aircraft on the F-105 Thunderchief. After that he worked for Convair on the F-104, F-106, and others. To support his growing family he took on side jobs, so began hauling hay and, as Norm puts it, did the "nasty job" of trucking chickens and turkeys. By 1960, Norm had formed a partnership hauling hay from the fields and stacking it for trucks to then pick up. This was his day job. At night he continued to work at Convair, ending in 1961 with the B-70 Valkyrie bomber project.



## 3 Are Hurt In Plane Crackup

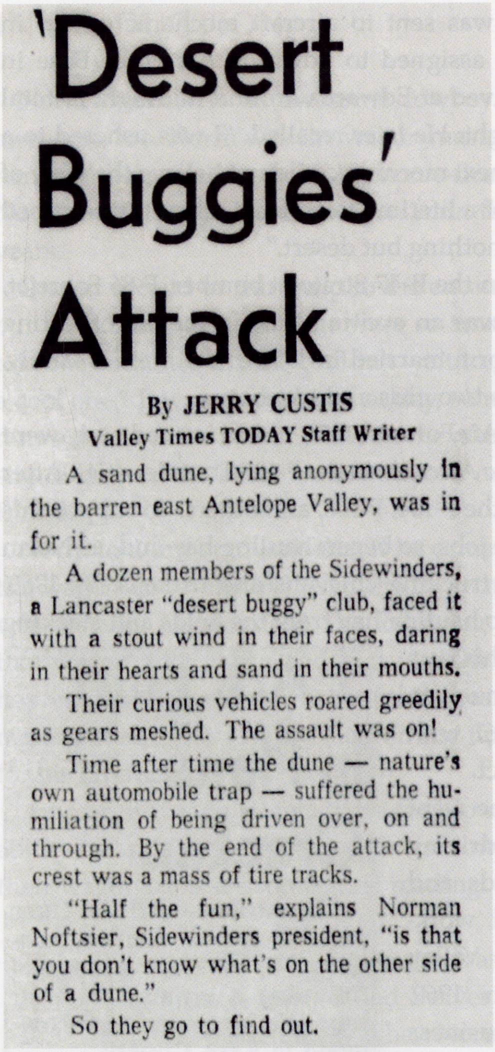
MOJAVE — AP — Three persons are in serious condition in a Mojave hospital following a crash of their four seater biplane near Rosamond in Kern County.

The injured are pilot Earl Fisher, 30, Rosamond; Charles Hill, 35, and Norman Noftsier, 25, both of Lancaster.

The plane, bound for Lancaster, took off from a private airstrip near Rosamond. John Russell, who lives near the strip, said the plane stalled at about 300 feet elevation after take off and crashed.

After Norm's aircraft days, he went into heavy construction and driving truck for the building of roads and housing tracts. That included working on most of the Antelope Valley Freeway, California SR-14. In 1969, Norm became president and business agent for Teamsters Local 982. During these years he was involved in the building of Pyramid Lake, Castaic Lake, and a portion of the California Aqueduct.

In his spare time Norm was active in Monte Vista Little League, dedicating his time through four seasons as well as becoming the league's president. Although his own children were not



# 'Desert Buggies' Attack

By JERRY CUSTIS
Valley Times TODAY Staff Writer

A sand dune, lying anonymously in the barren east Antelope Valley, was in for it.

A dozen members of the Sidewinders, a Lancaster "desert buggy" club, faced it with a stout wind in their faces, daring in their hearts and sand in their mouths.

Their curious vehicles roared greedily as gears meshed. The assault was on!

Time after time the dune — nature's own automobile trap — suffered the humiliation of being driven over, on and through. By the end of the attack, its crest was a mass of tire tracks.

"Half the fun," explains Norman Noftsier, Sidewinders president, "is that you don't know what's on the other side of a dune."

So they go to find out.

playing at the time, he enjoyed helping youth in his community. He also became president of the Sidewinders of Lancaster, a desert buggy club.

A farm boy at heart, Norm bought a place on the east side of Lancaster and started farming. In addition to raising cattle and pigs, he volunteered with 4-H and served the local youth club as swine leader for about four years.

In 1996, Norm was injured on the job and was considered disabled. With his retraining funds he attended wheelwright school at Boise, Idaho, and gained a new profession. Norm learned the old craft of building wagons and wheels, which led him to become involved with Corral 14 - Western Wagons Equestrian Trails, Inc.

Between farming, wagon making, and driving teams with the old-school teamsters of Corral 14, Norm had circled back to his beginning. He became president of Corral 14 and served as wagon master for about 10 years. Norm was able to plot out new wagon train routes for the club, including the drives from Lone Pine to Bishop (with help from Ron Remy) and Pahrump to Shoshone. Under Norm's leadership, the club also did other drives at Mariposa, California, as well as in Idaho. In 2005, he sold the ranch at Lancaster, married the gifted and talented author, Mary Jo Steele, and moved to Green Valley, California.

"The Death Valley '49ers have been wonderful to work with and help make the Death Valley wagon drive better every year. Without their support Corral 14 would probably not be able to do the Death Valley drive," said Norm. He took part in the 2021 Death Valley wagon train and, at age 86, thinks it could have been his last drive; he hasn't exactly closed the door on doing one or two more.

Norm reports that he has had a great life. He has a wonderful wife in Mary Jo. His family has grown to include six grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren with one more on the way. Of course, there are many "adopted" grandchildren that also call him "Papa." He said, "I have enjoyed many miles of wonderful wagon trains, including the Death Valley drive, seeing the beauty of God's work at three miles an hour."

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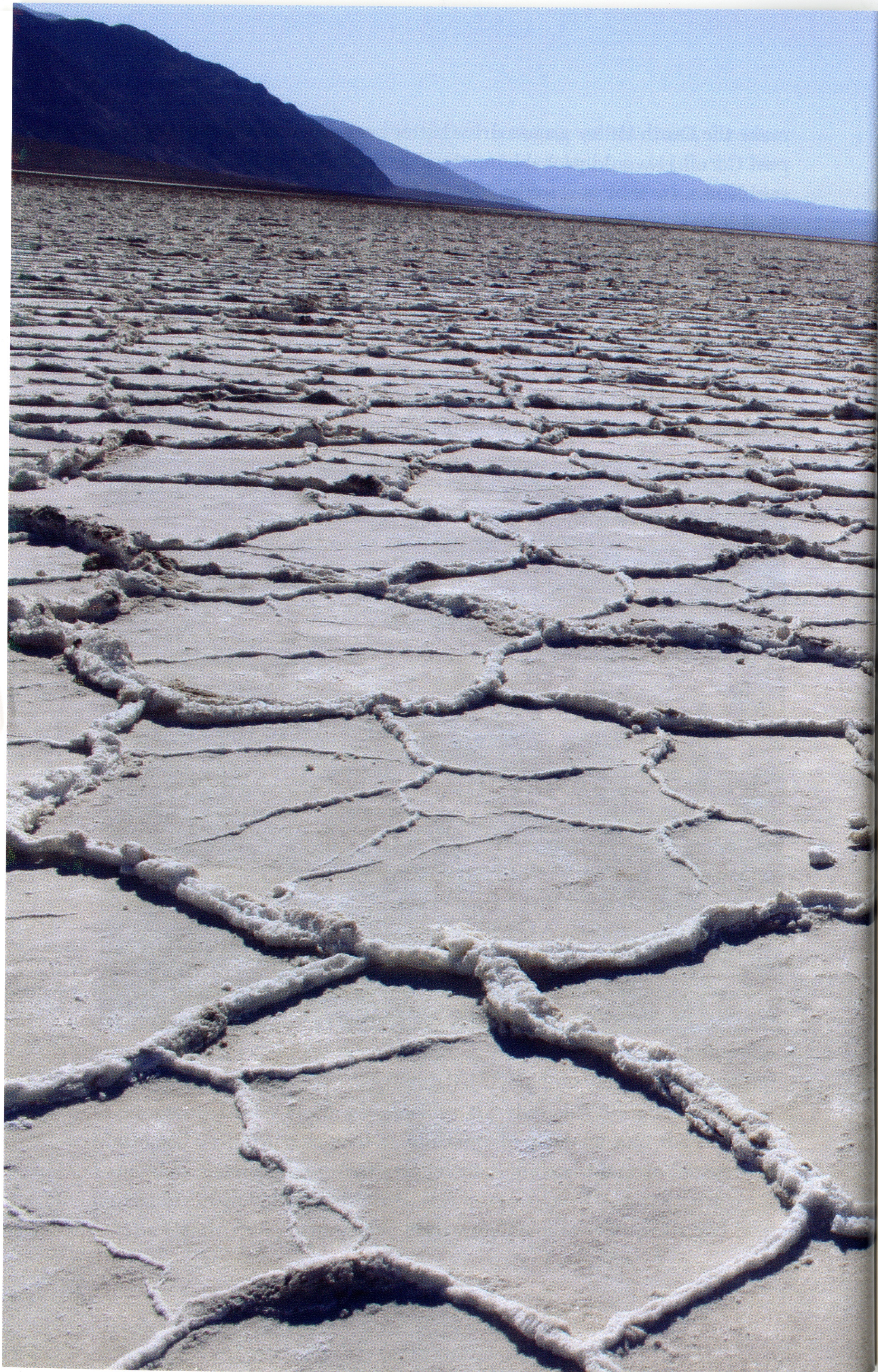


# KEN & PHEE GRAYDON

# INTRODUCTION

Mini and I saw Ken and Phee on our first Death Valley encampment trip. Though I didn't get the privilege of getting to know them well, I admired them from a distance. Ken was always the master of ceremonies that welcomed the wagon train to Furnace Creek. He was a gifted musician, a cowboy poet, and an awesome entertainer. He and Phee were both past presidents of the Death Valley '49ers.

Ken would speak, sing songs, and recite poetry while we all waited for the wagon train to make its way down the hill. Then, later in the day Ken would give talks on the museum patio and share his cowboy poetry and stories. Phee is also a gifted musician, singer, and artist. She has a great voice. It was a joy to hear Ken and Phee perform together; folks loved listening to them.

Kenneth "Ken" Hoyt Graydon was a California native born in 1933 and raised on a ranch in Delano in the San Joaquin Valley. He learned to train quarter horses with his father who had in his own youth been a working cowboy in Arizona. Ken once commented that at least he himself had enough sense not to ride broncs or bulls in any rodeos.

Both of Ken's parents fostered an appreciation for cowboy culture. They surrounded themselves with all the trappings of the Old West. His mother had designed their family home in the adobe style of the Californios, including an interior rich in vaquero, Mexican, and Native American themes. Besides horses, the family raised cotton and olives. This was Ken's environment during his formative years.

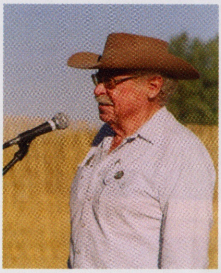
As a young adult Ken attended the University of Arizona at Tucson. He majored in engineering, but his love of cars drove him toward doing custom automotive electrical work. Cars weren't his only passion; Ken loved music. Besides playing the guitar and singing folk songs, he wrote his own music and poetry over the course of 30 years. Ken and his songs are still fondly remembered by many within the '49ers and beyond.

Phyllis "Phee" Payne Sherline was an Idaho girl, born and raised. After graduating from the University of Idaho, she came to Los Angeles to teach English. She married Harris Sherline in 1955 and welcomed three children over the next several years. It was then, during the folk revival era of the 1960s, that Phee learned to play the guitar. Although her marriage would end in 1973, her music thrived.

Among other projects, Phee wrote articles for "Sing Out" magazine, a quarterly journal that was in circulation for over 60 years. Phee was plugged into the song circles of Southern California. Luckily, so was Ken.

Ken and Phee married in 1980 and formed a beautiful musical and personal partnership. They performed together as a folk duo, singing at Scottish music festivals, folk festivals, and cowboy gatherings across the west, including at the Death Valley '49er encampments.

Phee said that she originally came to the encampments to watch Ken perform, but they soon both became advisors for the organization. Ken ultimately served as president in 2002 and handed the gavel over to Phee the following year. Phee served as chair of the fiddle contest and editor of the '49ers newsletter for many years. Upon her election to the top post she said, "It is an honor to know I will be joining those past presidents who, by now, are good friends. It has been a great privilege to spend so many years as a '49er in various roles."



Ken and Phee were also influential in Songmakers, an organization that was sort of a mutual support group for folksingers. They each served as president of their local chapter in Southern California on several occasions, yet their impact was felt far beyond the region. Ken taught popular workshops in songwriting and released several recordings of his work covering varied topics including cowboys, trains, and ships. Ross Altman, a fellow folk singer and friend of the Graydons, cleverly wrote the following at the end of Ken's life, "...thank you for a lifetime of trails, sails, whales, rails, and tales." Upon his death in 2011, the members of the Songmakers gathered in reverence to "sing Ken home." He and Phee, two warm and generous individuals, had been married for over three decades.

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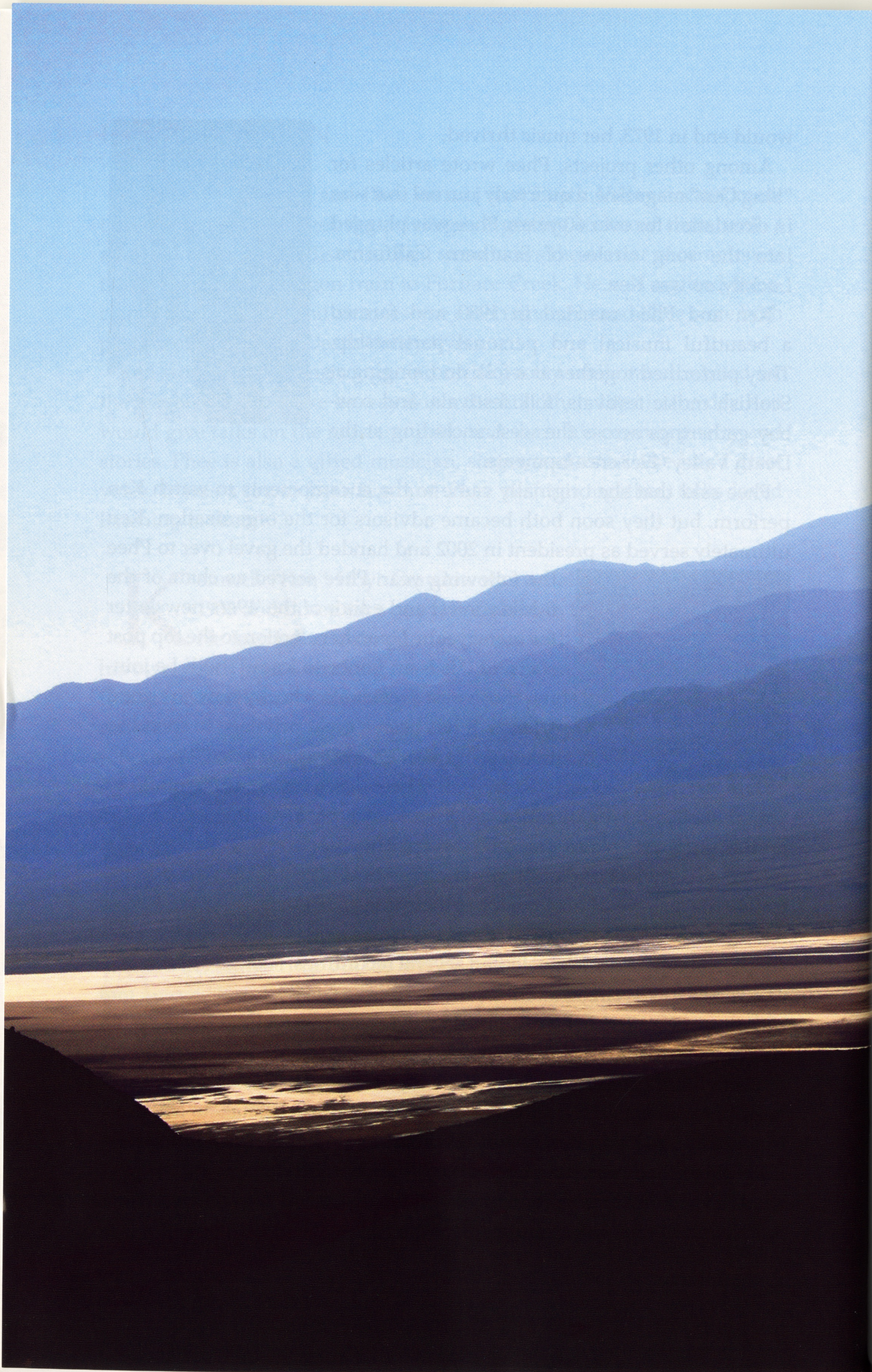


# SHARON SHEPPARD

# INTRODUCTION

After years of attempts at making it to the '49ers encampment, in November 2006 Mini and I finally arrived. When we came off the grade by the Furnace Creek Inn we were in complete awe. Looking down into the valley as far as we could see was a sea of trailers and RVs. We were pulling a toy hauler at the time and we didn't have a clue what to do next.

We first went to Sunset Campground, but it was full. We went to Texas Spring Campground; it was full. We were told to check the overflow campground by the road; it was full. I went into the Furnace Creek reservation office and was told that their campground was full, too. In despair, I went back to the truck and sat for a minute, just thinking. When I told my wife there's no spot available anywhere, she just cried. We had waited for years to go to this event and now we couldn't stay.

Still not giving up, I went back into the reservation office and asked to speak to the manager. I was introduced to Ms. Shep. I explained that we had searched everywhere for a spot and they were all full. I even told her about my wife's family being involved with the '49ers in years past (trying to persuade her), and asked if she might have another overflow area. She said no, but after some time of me asking questions about how we could stay, she asked if I would be willing to help the '49ers with the encampment. I said, "Sure! Anything I can do to help!"

Shep then had us follow an assistant to the date grove along the golf course. Oh my, it was absolute heaven. That's where we camped during the encampment for the next seven years. It was there where we first met Bill Pool, Dick Conn, and the rest of the set-up crew. Ms. Shep was the only reason that Mini and I had the opportunity to become part of the '49ers that year, being gracious enough to steer me towards them on that first encounter. We are forever grateful for her help and guidance.

Shep was the senior sales manager for Xanterra until her retirement in 2021 after more than 30 years in Death Valley. The '49ers were sad to see her go, but happy for her well-earned retirement.

Sharon "Shep" O'Malley was born and raised in Tacoma, Washington. As a young teen she had an experience she'll never forget. When Elvis Presley toured the Pacific Northwest in 1957 he did a show at Tacoma's Lincoln Bowl, the stadium next to Shep's high school. Forty years later she recalled her brush with the King of Rock and Roll:

> My dad, Pat O'Malley, Sr., was a Tacoma policeman who was helping cover security, so he asked me if I wanted to meet Elvis before the show in the football dressing room. Well, I walked in the door and there he stood! I started crying, so he [Elvis] came over and put his arms around me and said, "Don't cry darlin' or I'll start crying, too." And then he kissed me on my left cheek! I was 14 and thought I'd died and gone to heaven!

Shep graduated from Lincoln High School and, in 1962, married Petty Officer 2nd Class Ellis Sheppard. He also happened to be the son of a policeman. They lived in Southern California for a brief time until he was discharged from the Navy. The newlyweds then moved across the country to his home state of South Carolina where Shep would live for the next two decades. Her marriage ended, but her nickname stuck. She remained in Lexington, South Carolina, where she worked for Pioneer Machinery for 16 years.

Shep began working at Death Valley in December 1989. For as long as most can remember, she was the go-to person; a vital link between the Ranch at Furnace Creek and the '49ers. Her good nature, responsiveness to the needs of others, and skill at problem solving put her in a class of her own. Everyone likes Shep.

Over the course of her lengthy career at Death Valley many changes occurred. In 1994, the national monument was reclassified as Death Valley National Park. Superintendents, managers, rangers, visitors, and seasonal employees came and went. In 2012, the Furnace Creek visitor center was remodeled. In recent years, the ranch underwent a multi-million dollar renovation and re-branding; beloved old buildings demolished and grand new buildings erected. Shep remained a reassuring and reliable friend throughout any upheaval and probably had to field more than her share of complaints from old-timers.

Shep also bore witness to the changes within the Death Valley '49ers encampment as well. An event that once numbered in the tens of thousands dwindled to a fraction of attendees. Those remaining are appreciative of the friendship and care that Shep has shown the organization throughout her career, from the rambunctious throngs of yesteryear to the masked few of 2021.

In early 2020, Shep lost her dear partner and friend, Ambrose Kroetsch. Then, in a second terrible punch, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the hospitality industry and caused world-wide upheaval like no one had ever seen before. Still, she held on for the sake of others. The '49ers wish Shep all the best in retirement. It's time for her to put up her feet, relax, and dream of Elvis.

* * *

# LARRY & IDA BAKER

## INTRODUCTION

Larry Baker was what we call a white-collar man. In his work with the '49ers, Larry coordinated the events at Stovepipe Wells that included cowboy poetry and the quilt show. Lee Crosby once told me that if I ever needed an answer and he wasn't around, to call Larry. This man was smart, educated, and a dedicated '49er.

What impressed me the most about Larry was his unwavering generosity. It seemed at every encampment planning meeting, held four times a year, one committee chairman or another would come up against a shortage of funds. Larry would be the first one to write a substantial check and not even bat an eye. He was a very caring person.

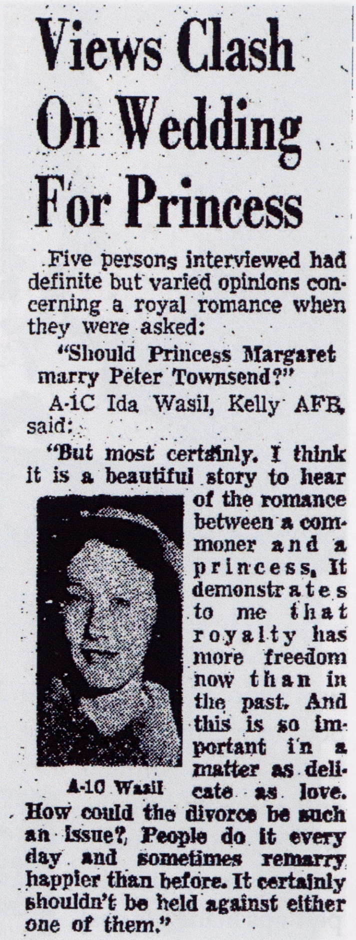
Larry's wife, Miss Ida, was also a kind and caring person. She would have pins or buttons or some trinket made up as a souvenir for the encampment. Whenever she handed them out she would spend time with each person making pleasant conversation. The Bakers were two great people and we were lucky to have them in the organization.

Lawrence "Larry" Colby Baker, Jr. was born in Michigan on October 6, 1935. His father was an electrical engineer at Detroit Edison. Upon earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 1957, Larry received a commission as a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy Reserve, serving from 1957 to 1961. He married Ida A. Wasil on June 26, 1960.

Ida served our country, too. In the 1950s, Ida was part of a program called the Women's Air Force (WAF). It represented a separate, but equal part of the military that was put in place in 1948 when President Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. This allowed women to serve directly in the military, though in limited roles compared to today. Recruits had to undergo lengthy psychological exams and physical training along with their military indoctrination. They were also expected to care for their personal appearance and were schooled in posture and comportment.

In 1954, Ida received training at Kelly Air Force base, San Antonio, Texas, where she was promoted to airman first class. Later, she became a staff sergeant attached to the 33rd Air Transport Squadron, McChord Air

Force Base, Tacoma, Washington. Ida was part of a flight crew that accompanied troops, officers, and dignitaries to destinations around the Pacific.



## Views Clash On Wedding For Princess

Five persons interviewed had definite but varied opinions concerning a royal romance when they were asked:

**"Should Princess Margaret marry Peter Townsend?"**

A-1C Ida Wasil, Kelly AFB, said:

**"But most certainly. I think it is a beautiful story to hear of the romance between a commoner and a princess. It demonstrates to me that royalty has more freedom now than in the past. And this is so important in a matter as delicate as love. How could the divorce be such an issue?, People do it every day and sometimes remarry happier than before. It certainly shouldn't be held against either one of them."**

A-1C Wasil

During her time in the WAF, Ida traveled to far-off places like Hawaii, Fiji, Canton Island, Australia, and Alaska. On one notable flight, she was part of the crew that returned USO entertainer Bob Hope and his troupe back to California from their tour of military bases in Alaska. As a gesture of gratitude, Mr. Hope invited Ida and the other two women on the flight crew to be guests at his home and to see the sights around Hollywood. Ida and her friends dined and danced at the famous Ciro's nightclub in West Hollywood, attended a movie premier, and visited Disneyland.

Mr. Hope also arranged for Ida and the crew to tour Paramount Studios where they met many Hollywood celebrities, including dancer Ginger Rogers and Big Band leader Les Brown and his Band of Renown. Ida even attended a dedication of the historical barn, by then relocated to Paramount Studios, in which Cecil B. DeMille made his first film along with Samuel Goldwyn in 1913. Those were exciting times in Ida's life.

Throughout the 1960s, Larry was the district manager of Travelers Insurance Company, Los Angeles. In 1971, he was appointed chief deputy insurance commissioner for the state of California. In his role he investigated cases of deceptive and fraudulent practices and insolvent companies. In 1971, he was called upon to testify in the Congressional hearings that took place after the San Fernando Valley earthquake that caused, among other damage, the tragic collapse of two hospitals. Backed with knowledge, confidence, and calm, Larry was adept at fielding difficult questions by the senators. In 1973, Larry was involved in investigating corruption of aides within California Lt. Gov. Ed Reineke's office.

JOHNNY GRANT, S/SGT. IDA WASIL, A/2C IRENE
. . . troupe plane's women crew members added Yule

Larry left the state's insurance department in 1975 to become president and director of Argonaut Insurance Company; at the time one of the largest underwriters of malpractice and workman's compensation policies in the country. Larry was a "fix it" man who helped the company through a volatile period of underwriting malpractice policies.

From the late 1980s into the '90s, Larry was senior vice president and general manager of the Automobile Club of Southern California (AAA), one of the encampment's generous sponsors. Larry was brilliant and successful in the world of management and finance, but he perhaps made his best decision in choosing sweet Ida as his wife.

TEAKETTLE JUNCTION
RACETRACK 6
HUNTER MTN 18

Larry passed away February 14, 2022.

* * *

# JIM & NANCY GRAVES

NANCY GRAVES

## INTRODUCTION

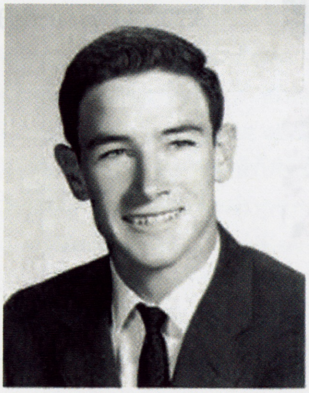
Jim and Nancy Graves were one of the first couples that Mini and I met at our first encampment. Jim and I worked side by side for over 10 years doing set up and tear down. We were the muscle, doing work that had become hard for others to do. On most days Jim and I would keep going until way past dark. In my view, Jim Graves is truly the backbone of the '49er organization. He taught me everything. Under his guidance I learned a lot about electrical, sound systems, and how to arrange wiring cables. We also assembled the stage, backdrops, and steps.

Jim and I became friends because of the encampment. We would talk for hours about how to make the encampment better the following year. I always enjoyed hearing about his Clamper trips and other outings.

For years, Jim's wife Nancy has been very involved in the costume contest. Being a seasoned seamstress, she's very talented in her field. She also helps with the kids' events and wherever else she can. The '49ers are lucky to have had contributions by both Jim and Nancy for so long.

James "Jim" Darrell Graves was raised in El Cajon, east of San Diego. In the 1963 Granite Hills High School yearbook, Jim's goal above his senior portrait simply says, "looking ahead… undecided." For a young man who was apparently "undecided," he soon decided on a job at San Diego Gas and Electric Company (SDG&E) and stuck to it for an entire career… with only a two year interruption thanks to Uncle Sam.

In September 1965, Jim was swept up in the first large draft of the Vietnam era and answered his country's call. Upon completing his military obligation and returning home from Vietnam in 1967, Jim was released from active duty. He resumed working at SDG&E.



By now, Jim was still "looking ahead" and, apparently, had become quite good at making decisions. In July 1978, he decided on a wife and son. Jim married Nancy Lee MacDonald and became a father to her young son, Robert.

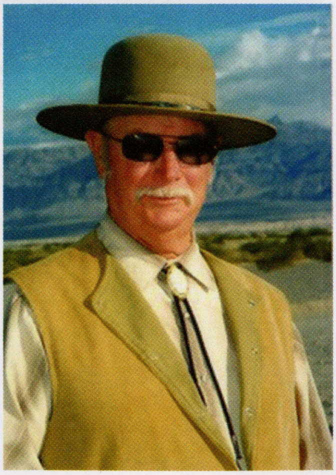
Nancy was born in Pasadena, Texas, in 1951, but soon moved with her family to New York's Long Island. In 1955, the family relocated one last time to San Diego. The family of five lived in a 17 ft. trailer for a few months until they got settled. Nancy's father secured a job with Convair (General Dynamics) and they moved into their home in Claremont, California, where her folks resided for over 45 years.

When Nancy and Jim married, they lived with Jim's parents until they could purchase their own home in the spring of 1980. Jim, Nancy, and Robert spent summers traveling the country and visiting friends and relatives. Several times Dr. Richard "Rick" Tullis, Jim's friend through E Clampus Vitus, sold Jim a '49ers membership. Jim didn't have immediate plans to attend the encampment and at the time didn't give it much thought.

Not all of the Graves' trips were together. Around 1988, Jim headed out with friends for a desert campout. Knowing she had some free time, Nancy's friends invited her to go with them to Death Valley for a few days during the encampment. When they returned home and Nancy told Jim how much fun she had, Jim decided they really should go together the next year so he could see what all went on.

That following year, Jim and Nancy headed to Death Valley and stayed in the Furnace Creek overflow lot. Camped near them were three men who soon learned that Nancy loved to play horseshoes. Each morning they would come over, clank their shoes together and ask, "Can Nancy come out and play?" Blackie Harms was running the horseshoes at the time and Lou Nunn was the chairperson.

Jim and Nancy became active '49ers right away, by first helping Rick and Joyce Tullis with the art show. Later, Jim began helping out with the Fiddlers' Stage and working with Bill Geist in setting up sound and lighting for the various events. Jim became president in 2011. Nancy became involved in the costume contest and horseshoe tournament.



When Blackie Harms retired from horseshoes, Nancy took over. She asked Hildy Geist to help work the table. Hildy would toss some shoes and read the manual.

That was the start of a lasting friendship. In those days there were about 60 competitors who would each pay a $10 entry fee. They would pitch from Tuesday through

Saturday. Prize money was awarded to the top three competitors in each division with the rest of the money going to the '49ers to help fund the following year's event.

Each year, Nancy received help from Sharon "Shep" Shepherd, the Xanterra sales manager, who would ensure that things went smoothly, like directing the groundskeepers to turn down the sprinklers to avoid mud in the pits. In reminiscing, Nancy remarked:

> When a fellow '49er backed into a water faucet, I went to Shep and she called maintenance. The workers were there in 10 minutes and fixed things up in no time. Thanks to special people like Shep and a lot of others who make Death Valley such a rewarding and fun place to visit over and over.

Jim retired from SDP&E in 1998 as a working foreman with 34 years of service. He is still active with the '49ers as the chairman of the production committee and edits the encampment program as well. Nancy keeps her hand in the costume contest and helps wherever she can. They have been active members and dedicated '49ers for over 30 years.

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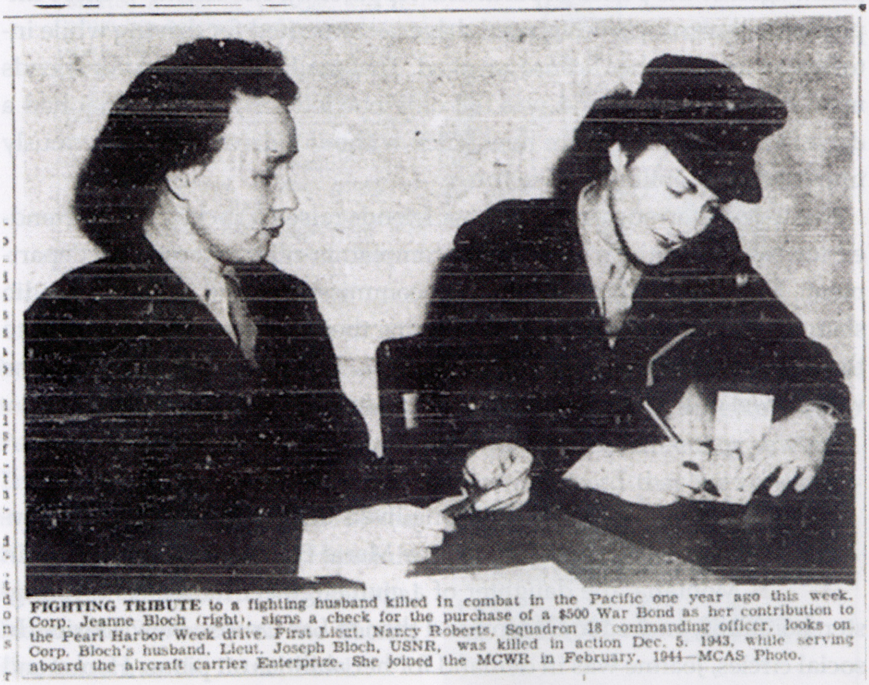
# JEANNE HOBBS



**FIGHTING TRIBUTE** to a fighting husband killed in combat in the Pacific one year ago this week. Corp. Jeanne Bloch (right), signs a check for the purchase of a $500 War Bond as her contribution to the Pearl Harbor Week drive. First Lieut. Nancy Roberts, Squadron 18 commanding officer, looks on. Corp. Bloch's husband, Lieut. Joseph Bloch, USNR, was killed in action Dec. 5. 1943, while serving aboard the aircraft carrier Enterprize. She joined the MCWR in February, 1944—MCAS Photo.

## INTRODUCTION

I understand that it was Jeanne Hobbs and her husband who introduced Lee and Lucy Crosby to the '49ers. Though I never had the privilege of meeting her husband, Jeanne was a remarkable lady. She helped with the '49ers encampment in any way that she could. She loved the organization and was a very active member well up into her advanced age. Jeanne had a bubbly personality and could tell a great story.

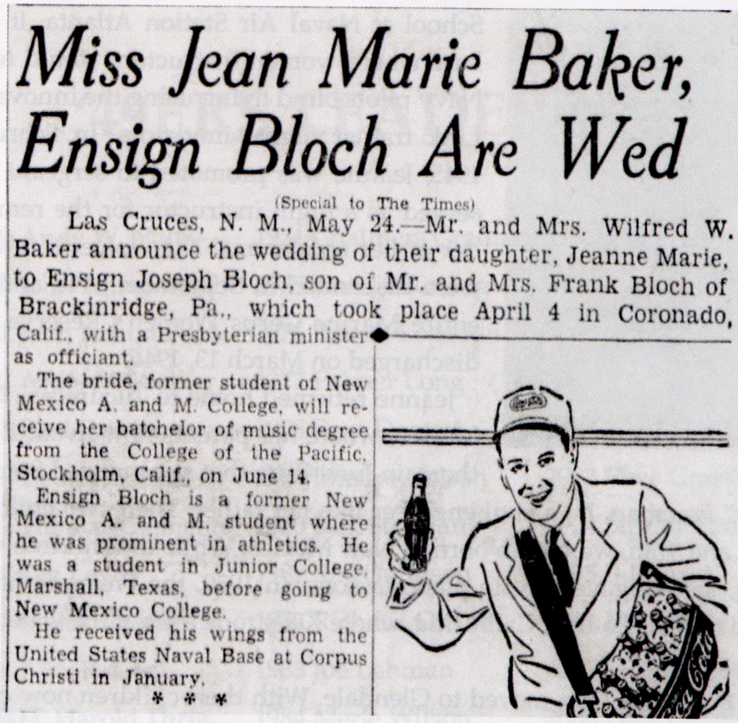
One of the stories she shared with me occurred in Bishop, California. A bunch of the resident senior citizens, Jeanne included, filed a formal complaint against the police department. Apparently, her friend — more importantly the group's designated driver — was cited for driving while intoxicated and had her license revoked. That made Jeanne and her friends mad, because their friend was the only one left among them that had a driver's license. They were now stuck without a driver, which seriously impaired their ability to have fun.

Not to be deterred, Jeanne and her friends raised a ruckus. They attended town hall meetings and lodged complaints against the police department. They wrote letters to the city commissioner and called the radio stations. As a protest, they started driving their golf carts through town to the golf course, right down the main roads. That story tickled me. Jeanne was a jewel of a person and fun to be around. I miss her a lot.

A person as special and long-lived as Jeanne Hobbs is deserving of a deeper look. Jeanne Marie Baker was born in 1919 in Montana, the daughter of a civil engineer father. As a youngster, her family moved to Oregon and then to Las Cruces, New Mexico. In social circles, Jeanne was in demand for her abilities on piano, Hammond organ, and voice.

Jeanne began college in New Mexico and went on to earn a Bachelor of Music degree at the College of the Pacific, Stockton, California. Shortly before her graduation in 1942, she married Joseph "Joe" J. Bloch, a Navy pilot whom she had met at New Mexico A&M. After their wedding in San Diego, Jeanne returned home to Las Cruces to teach high school music. Her husband shipped out to serve aboard the USS Enterprise (CV-6), an aircraft carrier in the Pacific Fleet.

Joe received the air medal for meritorious actions while piloting a scout



# Miss Jean Marie Baker, Ensign Bloch Are Wed

(Special to The Times)

Las Cruces, N. M., May 24.—Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred W. Baker announce the wedding of their daughter, Jeanne Marie, to Ensign Joseph Bloch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bloch of Brackinridge, Pa., which took place April 4 in Coronado, Calif., with a Presbyterian minister as officiant.

The bride, former student of New Mexico A. and M. College, will receive her batchelor of music degree from the College of the Pacific, Stockholm, Calif., on June 14.

Ensign Bloch is a former New Mexico A. and M. student where he was prominent in athletics. He was a student in Junior College, Marshall, Texas, before going to New Mexico College.

He received his wings from the United States Naval Base at Corpus Christi in January.

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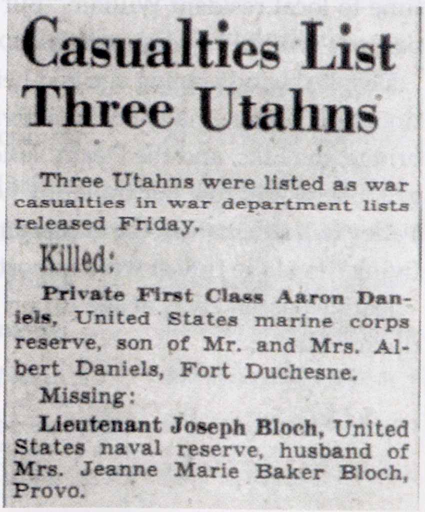
bomber in the battle over the Solomon Islands. In June 1943, he came back to New Mexico on leave before his second tour. Joe and Jeanne traveled to Pennsylvania to visit his parents. It would be the last time they saw him. Tragically, in December 1943, Jeanne received word that Joe was missing in action, presumed lost at sea. His name is etched on the Honolulu Memorial located in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, also known as the Punchbowl.

Reeling from her profound loss, Jeanne took up the mantle for her husband by enlisting in the newly-formed Marine Corps Women's Reserve. She resolved to do something meaningful in his memory. After training at Cherry Point, North Carolina, she was sent to Link Instructors Training



# Casualties List Three Utahns

Three Utahns were listed as war casualties in war department lists released Friday.

Killed:

**Private First Class Aaron Daniels,** United States marine corps reserve, son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Daniels, Fort Duchesne.

Missing:

**Lieutenant Joseph Bloch,** United States naval reserve, husband of Mrs. Jeanne Marie Baker Bloch, Provo.

School at Naval Air Station Atlanta. It was here where women instructors would teach Navy pilots blind flying using the innovative Link trainer flight simulators. In February 1945, Jeanne was promoted to sergeant and served as a flight instructor for the remainder of her enlistment. The women's schools were disbanded in September 1945 and the entire Marine Corps Women's Reserve was discharged on March 13, 1946.

Jeanne returned home to Tucumcari, New Mexico, where her parents now lived. It was there, in June 1946, that she married Stephen "Kelly" Freeman, Jr., a civil engineer like her father. Their two children, Melva and Tom, were both born in New Mexico. While the children were young, Jeanne gave private piano lessons. In 1950, the Freeman family moved to Inyo County, California, where Kelly took a job at the water and power district.

The Freemans later moved to Glendale. With their children now older, Jeanne took a job teaching music in the Los Angeles area public schools. In the 1970s, she and Kelly retired to Bishop, the beautiful Eastern Sierra town in which they had lived some twenty years before. Not one to fully retire, Jeanne became the music director for St. Timothy's Anglican Church in Bishop. After Kelly passed away in 1984, she married a third time to local resident William "Bill" Hobbs. They remained happy companions until Bill's passing in 2006.

Despite her advancing age and being widowed three times, Jeanne continued to pursue many social activities that she enjoyed, including golf, bridge, the Elks, and the Death Valley '49ers. Jeanne had both humor and grit. She would tow her trailer by herself over the steep grade into Death Valley to participate in the encampments. Spending time with friends and living life to the fullest were important to her.

Jeanne passed away at age 101 on May 10, 2021, having lived an extraordinary life.

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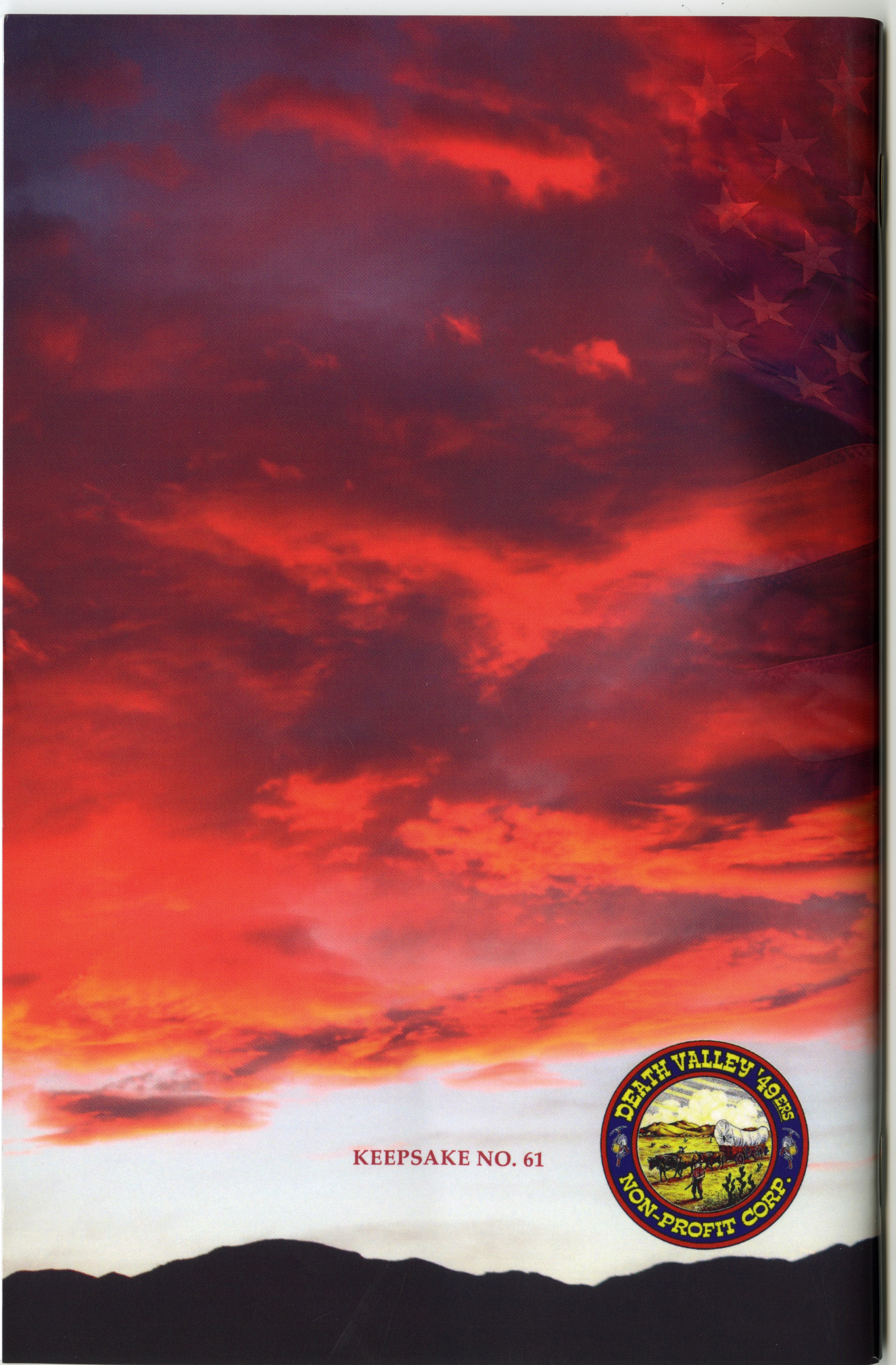
# ‘49ERS LEADERSHIP

1949 Andy W. Noon
1950 John Anson Ford
1951 John Anson Ford
1952 Ardis M. Walker
1953 Paul Palmer
1954 George Savage
1955 Thomas Clements
1956 Peg Lewis
1957 L. Burr Belden
1958 Alex Krater
1959 H. Harold Thrig
1960 Ralph P. Merritt
1961 George Sturtevant
1962 Charles A. Scholl
1963 Ralph A. Fear
1964 Arthur W. Walker
1965 Hugh Tolford
1966 Hazel Henderson
1967 Leo S. Moore
1968 Edward P. Jones
1969 Amil Morhardt
1970 Tom Mathew
1971 Paul W. DeDecker
1972 Dean Lemon
1973 Wm. Newbro
1974 Chalmers Graham
1975 George Koenig
1976 Robert Logsdon
1977 Palmer Long
1978 Ross Dorsett
1979 Elmore Nelson
1980 Jack Stoddard
1981 Russ Johnson
1982 Richard Crowe
1983 Joe Lehman
1984 Merle Wilson
1984 Leslie DeMille
1985 Arthur D. Guy
1986 George Jansen
1987 Mary DeDecker
1988 Raymond Peter
1989 Harry Tucker
1990 Earl Schmidt
1991 Dave Heffner
1992 Perry Deters
1993 Galen Hicks
1994 Lee Crosby
1995 Mike Nunn
1996 DeeDee Ruhlow
1997 Rick Tullis
1998 Lee Crosby
1999 Ray Sisson
2000 Edie Pool
2001 Sue Conn
2002 Ken Graydon
2003 Phee Graydon
2004 Shirley Harding
2005 Bill Geist
2006 Bill Pool
2007 Marvin Jensen
2008 Dick Gering
2009 Walter Hodgson
2010 Wanda Elmore
2011 Jim Graves
2012 Beverly Malley
2013 Letha Tatro
2014 Robert Whipple
2015 Dennis Harders
2016 Woody Adams
2017 Virginia Stockman
2018 Robert Whipple
2019 Dennis Harders
2020 (no encampment)
2021 Dennis Harders
2022 Robert Whipple



KEEPSAKE NO. 61

DEATH VALLEY '49ERS NON-PROFIT CORP.